Swami Venkatesananda

Barbara Waesse-Franz (ed.)

Spiral and Circle
From Hatha-Yoga to Enlightenment

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The Discovery of Love

What has *hatha* yoga to do with yoga philosophy? As fundamental as this question must be for any yoga practitioner, it is rarely discussed. Even so, the still bigger question of how this yoga philosophy applies to our everyday lives.

Spiral & Circle fills the gap between yoga theory and yoga practice. Although Swami Venkatesananda, who gave these talks in 1975, was an Indian monk and had been serving Swami Sivananda for a long time, his takes of yoga philosophy are far from traditional, but surprisingly unconventional and fresh.

So is his definition of what yoga is: it is the discovery of the union that is already there, the discovery that you and I really are one, the discovery of love: “The ultimate reality being oneness, the manifestation of that oneness is love. Love is merely the manifestation of the oneness that is already there.“

The purpose of *haṭha* yoga hence is not to get a healthy and long life, but to discover within myself the intelligence that is greater than myself. Thus, the idea of an I on the one hand and the world on the other hand gets dissolved, and with it all selfish motivations – which is *karma* yoga. *Karma* yoga is not a synonym for unpaid work! In the same way, *bhakti* is not devotion in the sense of the adoration of a faraway god. but aims at the realization that the division between the two is unreal. Experiencing this is the experience of love, it is unconditioned consciousness, the goal of *rāja* yoga. The realization of this oneness, which is the same in you and me and which is unconditioned, consciousness of love is the goal of *jñāna* yoga, or enlightenment. “There is no division in yoga at all", Swami Venkatesananda says: “Any yoga involves all other yoga”.

To illustrate that the ultimate experience of yoga is within reach for any of us, Swami Venkatesananda compares our life to a spiral movement. As long as it misses its origin, it seems to lose itself in the vastness of space. As soon as it turns itself towards its origin, towards the oneness within, the spiraling ends, and the circle is completed in fulfillment.

Swami Venkatesananda's teachings are neither religious exposition nor intellectual exercise. He introduces us to classical scriptures as the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* and Patañjali`s *Yoga Sūtras* in a non-scholarly way, so that we may “see if we can find a meaning that is relevant to our life".

This, our own daily life, is where we need yoga. It is in our daily life that we observe, “there is a problem which I cannot solve. There is pain, there is sorrow, there is confusion.” This is why we resort to yoga, says Swami Venkatesananda: “Vaguely there is a feeling that I’m making my own life miserable, and I’m asking: `Is it possible for me to overcome this’?” Once we have reached that point, it gets easier, because the attention is drawn within. We don`t need to go on searching without, as all we need is within: “The omnipresent is everywhere; no doubt, it is on the other side of the sun, but it is closest to me in me.”

These talks provide an invaluable variety of yoga practices, designed to lead us to this discovery. Many of them are directly inspired by the yoga scriptures, and dedicated to the practice of yoga off the mat: How to deal with physical and emotional pain? How to go to sleep at night?

This book is an edited transcription of talks held by Swami Venkatesananda in British Columbia, Canada, to a mostly young audience of mostly US-American North American yoga students. In 1975, yoga was still relatively new to the West. Since these talks took place then, we have seen there has been a wide array of *hatha* yoga styles, gurus, and trademarks brands arising, again especially in the West. 50 years later, this series brings us right back to the essence and origin of all these: a unified, integral yoga.

The audios of the talks which have been transcribed and edited here can be listened to on www.swamivenkatesananda.com. We have kept the original use of gender pronouns: SV, as was common at that time, uses the generic masculine forms.

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Haṭha Yoga

1 Something Beyond the Me

What was Swami Sivananda`s attitude concerning *haṭha* yoga, what basically yoga means, and how this *haṭha* yoga fits into the scheme of total yoga, let's look into that first and go on from there.

I think we must be cautious not to superimpose upon ourselves the teaching that we may hear. Because the teaching can never be applied. When a teaching is applied, it becomes cosmetics, it's not assimilated. You apply lipstick. But if you are healthy, your lips are red. These two are completely different! Externally, both may be looking very much alike: you paint your lips to look though you were very healthy. But this wears off – the other one doesn't wear off.

The teaching has to be assimilated. We come back to this when we discuss *jñāna* yoga. And therefore, one should not be shy of listening without the anxiety: „How am I going to do this?" or: „It's not relevant to me." We must be able to listen to the teaching of austerity without the anxiety: „I may not be able to apply this to my life, so I don't even have to listen to this."

It is by listening without this anxiety that we imbibe the teaching. When the teaching is imbibed, slowly it brings about a change deep within you, unknown by you, just like the food that is eaten undergoes a change and becomes assimilated completely unknown by me. That assimilated food, assimilated nourishment is converted into energy, and that energy is able to brighten the intelligence.

Our master has written quite a number of books on *haṭha* yoga. If you had gone to the ashram while he was there physically, you probably would have noticed that he wasn't standing on his head, he wasn't looking at his nose, he wasn't doing *prāṇāyāma* for the 24 hours of the day. The book says: „Don't take tea and coffee," and the first thing he asks you when you go to the ashram is: „Would you like a cup of tea, or would you like a cup of coffee – which of them do you prefer?"

Am I supposed to learn today only that which I can immediately apply to my life? Or something more? If I'm going to learn only what I can apply today, I am stagnant, I have no goal, I have no direction. I can stand only on the step on which I can stand, and if I'm quite satisfied there, I don't move. But life is movement. Life takes you from where you are to where you are going to be a few days later. Therefore, it is good to have a sense of direction, and that sense of direction is conveyed in the teaching.

So the teaching is there, and the teaching has to be listened to, and the teaching has to be absorbed, assimilated, without any anxiety: „How am I going to practice this?", without saying: „It is irrelevant, I like it, I don't like it". These considerations do not enter into it at all. The teaching is listened to. If the teaching becomes relevant as we progress, it grows from within. That's extremely important.

I think you heard the word *yoga* all your life. For obvious reasons, each person gives to this word *yoga* their own interpretation. Again, there is this anxiety: „How I am going to practice it today?" If this word *yoga* has a larger meaning, I ignore it because in my narrow lifestyle at the moment the larger meaning does not seem to have any relevance.

Therefore, rather than trying to understand the larger meaning, I reach out towards it. But then, because my hands are small, I drop it straight away, discard it. I restrict the meaning, so that yoga has come to mean a set of gymnastics. That's what I can do, and that's what yoga shall be. It's not.

Even a very modest Sanskrit dictionary will give you at least ten or twelve different meanings of the word *yoga*, one completely different from the other. One meaning, which I think all of you are familiar with, is similar to the word *yoke* – to bring together, to join. Another meaning of yoga is *contemplation*, deep, inward contemplation. *Acquiring something which you have not had* is also yoga. It has a materialistic connotation; it can be applied in a purely materialistic sense. I hope you don't miss that joke!

In India, if somebody talks about somebody having a whale of a time, you might hear them using the word *yoga* – „He's got a good *yoga*!", which means he's getting all he hasn't had so far. Astronomically and particularly astrologically, the conjunction of certain planets is called *yoga*. Again, the *conjunction*; the basic meaning is the same: things coming together, merging, integration, harmony.

Two completely dissimilar things can never come together. You see this in the domestic field all too often! Two totally dissimilar things cannot merge, but when they are both of identical substance, they merge instantly, as for instance two glasses of water. Pour them together, and they instantly mix, they become one. That is where you can really say they have become one. In the other cases, they are merely living together. Like water and milk, they are living together without becoming one: a little bit of fire underneath, the water is gone, and the milk becomes dehydrated, they've been separated.

I believe the word *sincere* is derived from such a root: *sin cere*, *sin cere* – *cere*: *ceramic*, *cement*, *wax*. An archbishop once gave me the explanation that they used to have marble tiles for houses. Sometimes the tiles would crack. The mender didn't want to lose the tile, and he applied some wax to the crack, so that it was unseen, unseeable, invisible. You buy that marble tile and put in on your roof: oh, it's marvelous, gorgeous!

One blind day of warm sunlight the wax melts away, and the crack is seen. He explained that *to be sincere* is *not to have a crack that has been masked*. It's a tile which is whole, which has no defect in it. In this tile, there has been no masking, it's clean, it's pure. It is possible to see water mixing with milk or sugar mixing with your coffee or tea, but the molecules are merely living together, they are not one. Only that which is identical, two things which are basically, fundamentally identical, can ever mix.

This is fundamental to the whole concept of yoga. We are not bringing two things together which are dissimilar. It is not as though we often heard it, I am sure, that „yoga is the union of the individual soul with the supreme soul, of the individual self with the supreme self, of the individual will with the supreme will, God's will, of *jīva* with God." If these are two completely different, dissimilar things, they can never come together. So, the basic concept of yoga is to discover the harmony or the unity that exists already.

Yoga is the unity or the harmony or the oneness that exists already. You and I are one, and can I discover that? If we proceed from our own domestic or social relationships, we'll probably discover very easily that you and I are in fact one, and that you don't have to battle to become one. When you do not pay

too much attention and lay too much emphasis on the dissimilarities, but that we can only become one if we are one already, you look for the harmony that exists already instead of going on beating around the bush and trying to reject the disharmony that does not exist.

Fighting the disharmony that does not exist is like curing phantom pain, pain in a limb that does not exist. I saw that once in a veteran's hospital for soldiers in the Second World War. We talked, and there was some *āsana* demonstration, and there was explaining to them what is good for what, and one man in the front row had a wooden leg, one leg had been amputated. He looked at me and said: „Swami, sometimes I feel excruciating pain in that foot. It's not there. What yoga posture is good for this?" What yoga posture is good for that?

When we are trying to struggle against this disharmony which does not exist, we are trying to push away something which is not there. If I realize that this harmony must be there already and proceed from there, it is easier for me to discard the disharmony. It is only then perhaps that I will even attempt to examine this disharmony, otherwise I don't. If I start from the premise that you and I are completely different, totally different, then we shall never come together. We don't even start, we don't even examine the disharmony, the ill-will or the conflict that might exist between us.

If you and I are one, why is it that there appears this disharmony? If I and God are one, fundamentally, basically, what is it that creates a fracture, a division? When the truth is omnipresent, when God is omnipresent, what is it that stands between me and God?

The simplest way to understand this clearly, is to have a blackboard or a wall, a clean homogeneous surface. Right in the center of it, you write the word *me*. What has interfered with the homogeneity of the blackboard? The *me*. Immediately after you wiped the *me*, the homogeneity of the blackboard is restored. The word *me* is the only place where this omnipresence does not seem to exist. Can you wipe that? The blackness of the blackboard had not been interfered with at all. It was still there behind the white chalk.

That is the exact meaning of the word *yoga*. In this omnipresence, in this cosmic oneness, in this cosmic being, somehow a concept of me has arisen. It's not true. If you accept this as true, then of course you don't even attempt to wipe it. You're still certain that you have destroyed the blackness of the blackboard at that point. When you wrote the word *me*, that blackness has not been taken away. A concept has been superimposed upon this omnipresence, upon this oneness. For the time being therefore, that homogeneity seems to have been disturbed. It's not disturbed, it's there. You wipe that *me* and then the blackboard springs back into its real nature.

Carrying on from what we are discussing now, *haṭha* yoga also must enable me to discover the truth concerning the self, which is beyond me, just like the blackness of the blackboard which persists unchanged behind and underneath this word *me* printed in white chalk. There is something which is beyond the me, beyond the ego-sense, beyond all thought, beyond all concepts. *Haṭha* yoga must also lead me beyond this me to that truth.

How does one know that there is something beyond the me which functions, which lives in what I consider my body? How do I know that such a thing exists? The simplest answer that has been given universally by most of these great masters is: examine your own sleep. During sleep you are there, you don't die. Life went on, the movement of energy was still there, consciousness was still there. I was not aware, but consciousness was still there. If somebody would tickle your foot, you would withdraw it. If your blanket fell off the bed, you picked it up. The intelligence was there, I was not aware. That's the million-dollar statement: I was not aware. Naturally I was not aware.

I need not be aware of how this body which has been accustomed to stand on both feet is able to stand on its head. When actions are done mechanically, one insists: „Become aware!" It's true: action done with awareness is better than action done blindly, automatically. But there is something beyond this awareness, beyond this I-awareness: I am not aware that I was asleep! I am not aware that my intelligence continued to be during sleep. There is something which the I is not aware of, which is the truth.

Something which the I is not aware of, is the truth. How do I know? Sleep. When I examine sleep, this is the immediate lesson I learn from it: there is energy, there is intelligence or consciousness, and these two continue to operate even when I am not aware. What happened when sleep came to an end? I became aware that I am lying in bed. That is when all the trouble starts!

So, the yogi tells us that there is something beyond the *me*, beyond the I or the ego-sense, and that something is the truth for all time to come. That was the truth, that is the truth, and that will ever be the truth. It is when a desire arises in it that the homogeneity or the oneness seems to be interfered with. There is an apparent loss of homogeneity, there is an apparent loss of unity, there is an apparent loss of harmony and oneness when mind or ego-sense interferes in this homogeneity.

From there on, all our problems start; all problems, including the problems which concern the body. Then I begin to think. I begin to think that this is my body and that I must look after it. There's already a confusion there if you say: „This is Swami Venkatesananda". When I say: „This is Swami Venkatesananda," I almost suggest that this body is Venkatesananda. But then I also say that I must look after this body. You see that I'm caught in it there? I have never been able to understand this puzzle. If this were Swami Venkatesananda, it should know how to look after itself! But then suddenly I turned around and said: „This is my body; I must look after it."

I think that this relationship between oneself and the body has never been clearly understood by anybody. Is the body me or is it mine? What is known as *haṭha* yoga is meant to enable us to see that there is something in the body, activating it, intelligently making it function, and that can look after itself.

We have a little trick for it. Stand up on the chair, please. Come to the edge. Don't look at your feet, your feet will still be on that chair, or below your knees: the toes begin to tremble. Dancing is done in spite of you! Stop it. Can you? If you try to stop it, it becomes worse.

That is it, that is yoga already! If standing there you can't figure out: „My God, I want to stop this!" And it says: „No, sorry, we know what to do," that is yoga. If all the yoga postures are done in that spirit of

watching: „My God! All kind of fantastic things are happening in the body!", suddenly you discover that that intelligence which sustained your life in sleep, and which is the same thing that made the feet tremble, that intelligence is capable of looking after the body. The most important discovery is: that intelligence is beyond me. That's all about *haṭha* yoga, we've finished it, now you can go home!

The discovery is that that intelligence is beyond the me, beyond the ego-sense, beyond the mind – so how much I can train myself? There is something, there is that intelligence, that life force, *prāṇa*, and that is beyond me, beyond the ego-sense. It is the discovery of this that really promotes health, not all the pushing and tackling and dragging that people bring into what they call *haṭha* yoga.

Therefore, Swami Sivananda's one unique teaching was that even if you're able to practice only a few of these yoga *āsana*s, practice them with such tremendous inner awareness that you will discover the God within, which is beyond the me. The awareness is meant only as a door. Don't get shut into it, get out of it. I must become aware of this, and when I become aware of this, I'm able to look beyond, beyond the me.

A few yoga postures will do, and even they can be done fairly mildly. Swami Sivananda always insisted: practice these yoga *āsana*s without undue exertion. When it came to *prāṇāyāma*, his motto was: „Inhale as long as comfortable, and hold as long as comfortable, and exhale as long as comfortable." One word is not more important than the other. I'm trying to reach out: can I prolong this, still not making it uncomfortable?

When you combine the two, there again you've got yoga, so that I'm not trying to kill myself, nor am I trying to be too soft. If I'm on this side, I am caught up in the me, in the anxiety that I am going to preserve this body and I am terribly important and I must work out all the laws and principles of the game. If I try to jump out of it, I'll discover that it's not possible either. It's the me again that tries to jump out.

So, all the practices of *haṭha* yoga are to be done as contemplation, as a meditation, in such a way that they may enable one to discover the power, the intelligence that is beyond the me. It is here that the yoga *āsana*s or the *haṭha* yoga or whatever you wish to call it becomes part of the total scheme of yoga.

I'll show you something. Please stand, relax completely. Lift your left arm, at shoulder level. You can play with it now. Your mind is still in your head, and that mind reads a discomfort in the shoulder: it's a bit heavy and funny. I'm this arm also. I'm not separate from this arm. I'm also this arm. Which means: your mind flows through the arm right down to the fingertips. When you do this, the pain, the discomfort is not there.

You do these two things: one, the mind is still there, sitting there in your head and looking at this swami, a capable fellow – he makes me hold the arm, and now the hurt is like hell. The next moment you say: „Oh no, I am right through the fingertips," and during those few moments the discomfort is not there. Can I experience it?

It’s a strange thing, and that is precisely again the message of deep sleep. That’s when the mind goes through – at that moment, the pain has temporarily gone. That’s what sleep tells us again: in sleep there is no division between you and the pain, and therefore there’s no contact. That is, you are not separating your consciousness from that part which is painful. You are the whole, you are total!

Therefore, health from the yogi’s point of view is not a clinical symptom. The yogi’s health is not measurable clinically. Clinically, Swami Sivananda was sick! He had diabetes, he had lumbago, and he had this and that – a whole host of them! But when you looked at his face, into his eyes, there was no sickness. He didn’t fight it at all. He took medicines, yes, just as we take food. He didn’t fight that way. That is, all the time there is what you and I might call *reconciliation*. There’s no rejection, there’s no fighting, there’s no quarrel.

When I avoid this division, the pain is gone. Even if there is an emotional pain, I’m sitting on top of something and watching this pain, feeling sorry for myself, and accusing this God, and „why does this happen to me, of all people on earth?”. I’m rejecting and I am separating myself from it. I’m dividing the one into two: I and the pain, I and whatever be the situation in which I disown myself. If I and the situation are one, then there is no pain. It’s fighting, it’s rejection that causes that pain. One can use an emotional situation to overcome this division, to sort of mitigate this division, to see that the division does not exist.

I believe Ramana Maharshi is familiar to you. He’s a great sage; I narrate some of his stories now and then. His standard answer was: „Where was all this in your sleep?” If you say that you are miserable because your wife ran away: Were you also miserable in sleep? No, even though the wife had still run away, she didn’t come back while you were sleeping. Did you feel miserable when you were sleeping? No. Why not? And you existed! You continued to exist during sleep, and yet you did not feel the misery, right? Whatever might have been his answer to this question, the answer seems quite obvious, that there was no division in deep sleep.

That is the explanation of even the yoga *āsana*s: It is not a kind of magic cure; it restores this harmony or the wholeness and enables you to realize that the body is not assembled of spare parts, it’s an integral whole. The wholeness of even the physical body is restored to it. Then one realizes that it is not just the physical body that is whole, but the physical body is in harmony with the mind and the spirit and so on.

2 Spiral and Circle

Having created a division between I and the other, man has tried to recover the state of non-division, but all the time keeping the me there. That's an extraordinary thing, if you watch again. „I want to become one with you," that is: „I must still be there. I do not want to lose myself. I want to go to heaven. I want to realize God." It's all the time „I want to, I want to, I want to."

There is a lovely little Sanskrit text called the *Yoga Anusandhānam*. It is very little known. As far as I can see, there is only one edition published, very beautifully illustrated. The author roundly criticizes every other approach except for the yoga method. Obviously, he wants to sell yoga! But some of the arguments are beautiful: to attain self-realization, I practice right action, charity, I try to become as good as possible and try to do as much good as possible. By all these methods, I gain a certain sense of satisfaction, which I feel is heaven. Heaven is not somewhere else! The tremendous satisfaction that a good man feels when he goes to bed, to sleep, that itself is heaven, and so he goes to bed in heaven every day. There may or may not be another heaven.

When the consciousness is blotted out temporarily in sleep, what happens to you, if you have been a good person, is heaven. I've done something marvelous today, and I'm quite satisfied with myself, pleased with myself, proud of myself. Then I go to bed and sleep. I'm very happy because there is no anxiety, there's no bother inside me, but then the funny thing is that I have to wake up.

Waking up in bed the next morning is not terribly different from waking up in another bed called *body* a little later. The famous re-incarnation is just this: I jump into my bed, sleep, and wake up in the next morning, find myself in this bed. On another level, in another dimension I fall asleep in this body and wake up to find another body. Therefore, his criticism is, how good you may have been, you are still caught up somewhere, not released, so that I might have been a very good man today and go to bed and sleep very soundly and peacefully, happily, blissfully, in heaven. But I might wake up tomorrow morning and become quite vicious.

His contention is that all these jokes have been tried fruitlessly, that you go round in circles – we will come back to this, when we discuss the circle – and therefore good action in itself is of no real use. If I am good and therefore all the actions that proceed from me are good, that's a different story. We will come back to that when we discuss *karma* yoga.

When I'm doing what is called *right action* motivated by a desire to gain something, I'm not doing this at all, I am trying for that! I'm good to you, if that is the only way in which I can get something out of you. So, he says, that's of no use. You must attain self-realization.

There were others who declared that I is finite, limited, and God by definition is unlimited, infinite. This I can somehow be linked to that infinite, yoked to that infinite, in a sort of love-relationship, in a sort of devotion, but on the duality level.

Preserving this duality relationship, I worship God, I adore God. Their ideal was, like in Christian theology, after having lived a life of devotion, love, *bhakti*, to go to the particular kingdom of God, or, the kingdom

of the particular God. There are quite a few, in Indian metaphysics, or theology, or philosophy. They have got a kingdom for Śiva, they've got a kingdom for Kṛṣṇa, they've got another kingdom for Viṣṇu, and they've got another kingdom for – all sorts of nice, beautiful, lovely places.

Then came another metaphysical speculation that God is not an un-manifest being, but manifest in the creation, so that when this creation comes to an end, that kingdom gets dissolved in the infinite. If you earn membership of that club, you go and sit there, do nothing at all from then on than be devoted to God, and when that God gets dissolved, you also get dissolved. Nice! A beautiful idea. It's called *krāma mukti,* gradual evolution.

This man asks again: „Okay, if you go to that heaven, but then if you fight with your boss, what happens?" It's possible, isn't it? Because there is still a dual relationship, a duality relationship. I love you means: „I may not love you" or: „I expect you to scratch my back, and if you don't, I don't like you anymore."

These are several arguments used by this *Yoga Anusandhānam* for saying: Here and now you must practice yoga and attain self-realization, so that there is no further possibility of being involved in the wheel of pain and death.

In the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, there is a verse:

> *Aśeṣa tāpa taptānāṃ samāśraya maṭho haṭhaḥ*
> *aśeṣa yogha yuktānāmādhāra kamaṭho haṭhaḥ* (1.10).

It's a lovely picture: When you're walking along a desert, in the hot sun, you are looking for a shelter, and when you find a shelter, you are in bliss, you are delighted! It says that whatever be your suffering, whether it is physical or psychological, emotional, or psychic, whatever be the fire of suffering which burns you, come into this *haṭha* yoga, as it will give you shelter.

So, the practice of *haṭha* yoga is not only a physical affair, meant to get rid of some aches and some pains, what is good for my liver and for the phantom pain, but it is also related to emotional disturbances, psychological stress, right up to the ultimate problem of division between I and the other. That also must go. If it does not go, then it's of no use; the seed of mischief has been retained.

According to the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, whatever be the yoga that you practice, this *haṭha* yoga is the basis. If one neglects this, then one may console oneself: „I'm practicing yoga, I'm practicing meditation, I'm practicing *bhakti*, I'm a *karma* yogi" but something vital is missing, the foundation is missing.

Another famous quotation you might find in most books on *haṭha* yoga is *śarīra ātmam kaivalya sādhanam*: „It is only with the help of this body" – here body means the body and the intelligence built into that body – „that you are able to perform anything else".

Swami Sivananda said quite often that even for enjoying the pleasures of this world, you need a healthy body. If you're sick, even that isn't possible. If you want to work and earn, be successful, prosperous in this life, again you need a healthy body. And so, says *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*: Whatever be the yoga you

practice, this is the cornerstone; without it, you cannot go anywhere. This is the foundation, of any yoga practice.

As we go on, we'll probably discover that *haṭha* yoga is not just a set of gymnastics which can be treated on a purely physical level. Nothing happens on a purely physical level. What the body does, the mind is involved in, the spirit is involved in it, and your emotions are also involved in it. When the whole thing is harmonized and given the right direction, there is yoga. Otherwise, there is still not yoga. This is treated as a set of gymnastics, *karma* yoga is merely social service, and *bhakti* is only *Hare Kṛṣṇa*, jump and dance or go into ecstasy, or, if you cannot, take some drugs.

Let's have a look at the fundamental philosophical basis of *haṭha* yoga. We'll revert frequently back to this fundamental truth, and that is that the infinite consciousness alone is true, is the reality. Whether you call it *God*, *īśvara*, *ātmā*, in the infinite, there is no duality. The infinite can only be one, there cannot be two infinites. And the infinite by definition is indivisible. You cannot cut the infinite in two parts, you cannot divide it, you cannot have two or three infinites, and that alone is the truth.

The infinite is consciousness, intelligence, which we see: Throughout the universe we see this consciousness, this intelligence, which is again omnipresent, all-pervasive. You can see it in the trees, in the blossoms, in water, in everything, in the air. Everything is pervaded by this consciousness or intelligence.

Consciousness is not inert, dead substance, but consciousness is a living being, living entity – not living in the sense you and I are living, but full of power, full of energy. Consciousness is pervaded by energy; energy is therefore as it were the very nature of consciousness.

That is what is known as *cit śakti*. These are some of the words which you will find in *haṭha* yoga texts. *Cit* means *consciousness*, *śakti* is *power*. Consciousness, in which energy is inherent, not merely latent, but inherent, is *cit śakti*; energy which is not blind, but which is indwelled, permeated by consciousness, is *cit śakti*.

So, here we have an ocean of consciousness with its inherent energy or power, the two not being different, nor divisible. There is no fire without heat, and the heat cannot be taken away from the fire, you can only transfer the fire to some other thing, kindle one flame to the other. The nature and the substance whose nature it is cannot be parted, cannot be separated.

We always have a sort of compulsion to divide, to separate, to analyze. In the East as in the West, we talk of man and his nature as if of two completely different things. In the same way, this *cit śakti* is divided into two, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, as though these two were completely independent entities, and then we create a lovely little figure of Śiva. Śiva is *puruṣa*, and Śakti is a nice little Goddess.

Once the division is made, arbitrarily and without any sense whatsoever, then you belong to the Śakti-cult, I belong to the Śiva-cult, and this is why we fight eternally. I say that Śiva is supreme, *puruṣa*, and you say: „No, Śakti is supreme." He who says Śiva is supreme, he says, you know, Śiva is so great and so nice that Śiva has allowed Śakti to occupy one half of him. Then the *śakta* say: „No, rubbish. Śiva is

death, inert. It is Śakti that is power, that has created all this universe". You find a picture illustrating this, with Śiva lying down, and Śakti dancing on his body. That's the symbolism. But one must realize that these two are forever inseparable.

In this cosmic consciousness, energy keeps moving all the time, everywhere, everywhere. And in that movement of energy, there is no division. To see such a division is as if someone dips a cup into the ocean and sees the water in that cup as something distinct and separate from the rest of the ocean. Mysteriously, the cosmic being with its inherent movement of energy on a cosmic scale becomes limited. Becomes limited? Perhaps yes, perhaps no. From there on you must tread very softly. We see the division, and we see that the division exists as long as we see the division.

There we're caught in a very tight vicious circle, in a circular argument: How do you know that division exists? Because I see that division exists. As long as I see the division exists, that division continues to exist.

Therefore, this *cit śakti* comes to be known as *jīva*. *Jīva* is the living consciousness, but with an apparent division, not on a cosmic scale, but as I. Still there is no division! There is this cosmic consciousness with its inherent cosmic energy, but there is an apparent individuality.

What is that apparent individuality? It is the I; the thought, the concept, the notion *I am*. When sleep comes to an end, the first principle of awareness that becomes manifest is *I am*. You add to it: „I am still in bed," „I am asleep," I'm waking up," „I'm dreaming, then I'm going to sleep a little more" – all this, but then the first two words are still „I am". Without *I am* there is no external awareness.

So, in this cosmic consciousness somehow these *I am*-concepts, -thoughts or -notions spring up, and that is called the *jīva*. And that is also called the *citta*, the mind, mind-stuff. The mind is the cosmic consciousness, apparently limited by the notion; there is no limitation, but it is apparently limited by the notion.

I have a funny axiom again: you cannot call something a part unless it can be parted. The finger is part of me because you can take it off. The space in a jar is not part of this room-space, because that space cannot be parted and taken away. You cannot put an open jar here, fill it up with space, close it and take it away: „Ah, I've taken some space from that room!"

And yet, when you see a glass jar, you see a space within the jar, which is apparently distinct and different from the space outside the jar. So, the notion of a *jīva*, of an individual soul, individualized consciousness, is nothing more than a notion. The notion of cosmic consciousness is *citta*, *my mind*. Therefore, there is no such thing called *my mind*, in the same way as there is no such thing called a *space* in a particular jar, there is nothing called *my mind*. It's only mind. But because that mind, that consciousness, that intelligence seems to have a notion called *I* — like the jar – it thinks: „This is my mind."

In the same way, this cosmic energy, when it entertains a notion that „I am a living personality", it becomes *prāṇa*. *Prāṇa* or life-force or power, energy, is also not divisible, it's cosmic. That is why we react upon each other, that is why we and the world interact on each other.

So, all these words are identical in their meaning. Ultimately, though we can go on spinning concepts to distinguish one from the other, *jīva, citta* and *prāṇa* are identical. Only if that is seen clearly, it is possible for us to see how the mind and *prāṇa* or the life-force react upon each other, how for instance *prāṇāyāma* helps control of mind and a wayward mind disturbs the flow of *prāṇa*, how a disturbance in one causes disturbance in the other, how the flow of energy in the body, if it is haphazard, if it is disturbed, can disturb your mind and how, when the harmony in the mind is restored, the *prāṇa* gets restored.

One must see that these two, *citta* and *prāṇa*, are identical; they are not two different things. The same thing has also been given a beautiful name with which I think all of you are familiar: *kuṇḍalinī*. This concept of *kuṇḍalinī* is very interesting. We'll go into the orthodox interpretation of it, but let's look at it in a fairly unorthodox way first.

Kuṇḍalinī literally means *coiled*. It's amazing that these yogis visualized energy or the source of energy as being coiled. And that view of it is the latest, isn't it? Armature, engines, motors and so on, all these modern inventions are based on some kind of coil, coiled copper wire. It is not only something straight, it's coiled!

The energy is represented as a coil. What is a coil? When you draw a line, taking it from one point and returning to that point, the circle is complete and there is no coil. Can you see something interesting happening there? You start, go round, and when you are close to the starting point, you miss it. You miss it and you go round, and then you keep going round and round and round and round.

There is movement of energy in consciousness. This movement takes place on a cosmic scale, at an infinite scale, at an infinite number of places, everywhere, everywhere at the same time. This movement has consciousness as its basis because energy is inherent in that consciousness. But as it goes on whirling, it seems to miss coming to the starting point. Why does it do so? That's not the question; it does so. When it misses that, there is an outgoing tendency. This is also clear: the circle is complete, and that's it. It does not go out. But once that is missed, then there is an outgoing tendency, and the spiral is formed.

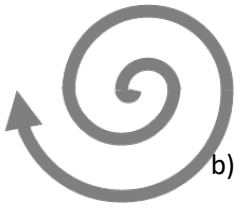
a)  b)

Figure 1: Spiral and circle
a) There is movement of energy in consciousness that misses forming a complete circle.
b) If it does form a complete circle, there is liberation.

That is the basic philosophy of *haṭha* yoga: there is movement of energy in consciousness, and as it begins to vibrate and move, it misses forming a complete circle. If it does form a complete circle, there is an end to it, there is liberation. That motion is within that center, and therefore, there is no disturbance in it, there is no disharmony in it, there is no spiral movement. There is no movement away from the center.

That is what happens in *samādhi* or deep meditation. In meditation, there is still movement, but not away from the center! Even so, in the life of a self-realized yogi, there is still movement, but not away from the center. That is what the Buddhists call *collectedness*, that is: the whole thing is collected; it is not dispersed.

Now, in relation to the human body, the center of consciousness is *sahasrāra*, *Brahma-randhra*, at the top of the head. And there, there is movement of energy or *prāṇa*. When in normal activity, it misses the starting point and comes round to the eyebrow center. This is where a notion arises, a thought arises. Perhaps you think: „My God! What happened to me! I got lost!" The thought becomes the seed for the mind. The energy moving away from the center gets bewildered, begins to think, and the mind is formed. Then there is further movement in space, and we come down to the throat-center. The same „I`m lost" is moving in the throat.

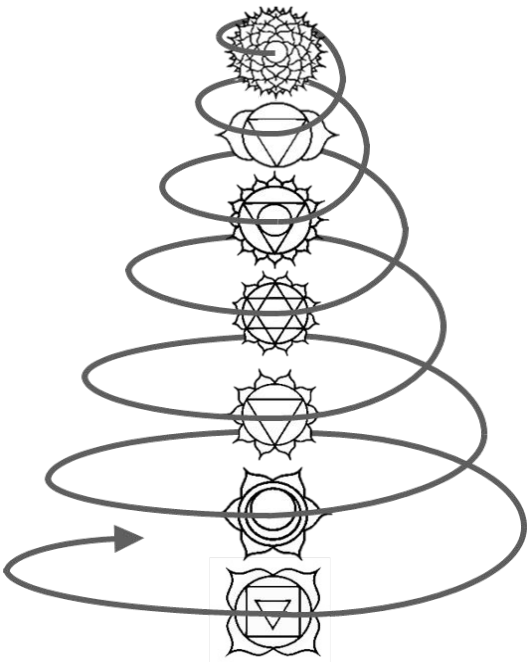


Figure 2: Energy spiraling out as kuṇḍalinī

Every one of those spirals has got a top and a bottom. That is how the individual is linked to the cosmos. I think, and at the same time there's a cosmic mind, and I'm linked to that cosmic mind – the same thing!

From here, the spiral goes there, and then I'm linked to the cosmic space in the throat. I'm linked to the cosmic air at the heart, I'm linked to the cosmic fire in the *manipura*. And I'm linked to the cosmic water in the *svādhiṣṭhāna.* And I'm linked to the cosmic earth in the *mūlādhāra*. The spiral goes out and out and out and out, and there is a complete and total haphazard, erratic movement away from the center.

That is the fundamental basis of *haṭha* yoga philosophy: that consciousness polarizes itself into energy, and there is movement of energy within consciousness, and when this movement is unable to fulfil itself immediately, unable to complete the circle immediately, the incomplete circle, the imperfect circle becomes spiral and there is concentric, but outward motion. The entire *haṭha* yoga philosophy, *haṭha* yoga practice, lies in reversing the movement of this energy, so that from this haphazard dispersal of energy, the energy is gathered in. The energy is gathered in, and when the energy is gathered in, the consciousness is also gathered in, till eventually the polarization of consciousness and energy, the division between consciousness and energy is also overcome, and the circle is completed for once. And that is known as *laya*. *Laya* means *absorption* or *return to the source*.

There is a beautiful doctrine that consciousness, in which energy is inherent, wants to know its own power. That consciousness-energy at the top, where it is not divided, where the *kuṇḍalinī* is not separate, distinct from consciousness – or, if you want to use the orthodox terminology, where Śakti is not different from Śiva, Śakti and Śiva are at one – there is total at-one-ment in the *sahasrāra*, there is no difference at all. That is: in that consciousness, which is conscious in sleep, there is no difference at all, there is no distinction at all! And in it, there arises the wish, the desire. The wish that arises in this intelligence is: „What is this power? I want to experience this power?" And immediately the spiraling starts.

It is said that in the case of some great, rare, mighty people, or what is known as *the Gods*, the circle is completed there. That is: there is movement in the center itself. That is perfection, perfect in all respects. There is no *māyā*, there is no illusion, there is no delusion, there is no conceptualization, there is no notion. There is pure awareness, not just pure being, but pure awareness, self-awareness. The wish to know myself arises, and there is realization of self. The wish to know myself ends in realization of self. That's it.

As the spiral weaves in this consciousness, there is movement of energy that assumes a particularized, notional consciousness, which is the *jīva*, *I am*. When this I am begins to move, there is the awareness *I am moving in space*, and this *I am moving in space* wants to hear. When it wants to hear, space is created on the upper arc of the spiral and the sense of hearing is created on the lower arc of the spiral. Even when you wake up, the first thing is that you begin to hear vaguely some noise.

Then that notional consciousness-energy wishes touch, and the second spiral is formed: air on the macrocosmic side and the sense of touch on the microcosmic side – the same thing. That upper arc represents the macrocosm, this lower arc represents the microcosm, both being one.

The spiral expands or deepens, whatever you wish to call it. After sleep, first you hear some sound, then you feel the bed clothes. You open your eyes. I want to see: „What then?" When that happens, the spiral

has gone one more round and on the macrocosmic side, there is fire, luminosity, light, and on the microcosmic side, there is the sense of vision. Then once again the spiral expands and there is the wish to taste. On the macrocosmic semi-circle, that becomes water and on the microcosmic becomes the sense of taste.

Lastly, on the macrocosmic sphere there is the earth, earth element, and on the microcosmic the sense of smell. Thus, simultaneously the movement of energy in consciousness has created the world and me, the two being not different.

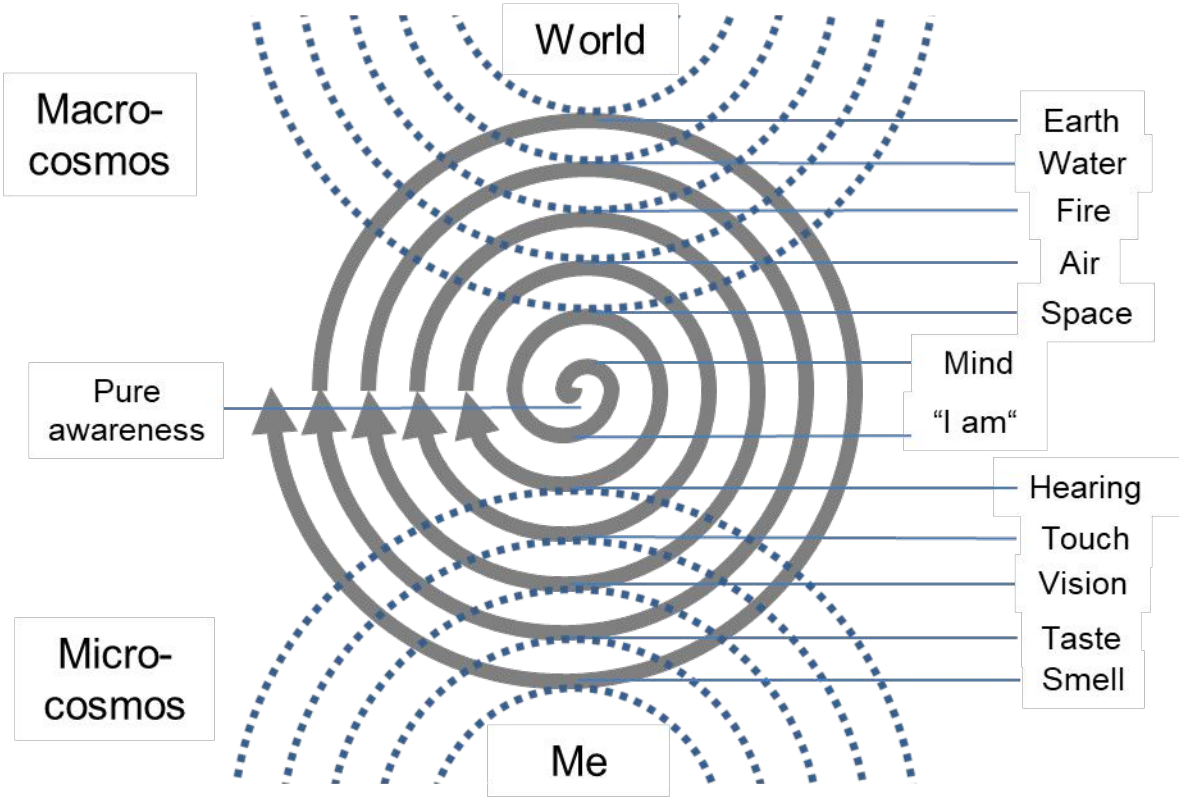


Figure 3: The creation of the macrocosmic world and the microcosmic me, the two being not different

That's terribly important to remember: I exist because the world exists and the world exists because I exists. The two are simultaneously brought into being by the combination, or so-called combination, of energy, consciousness, plus the wish.

That is one of the reasons why they insist that one who wishes to practice yoga seriously must not further this desire syndrome. If you keep desiring and at the same time you are telling yourself that you are awakening your *kuṇḍalinī* and then raise it up, back to its source, there's a two-way movement.

All this has taken place, this is still taking place every moment of our life. The energy, the *cit śakti* or the *kuṇḍalinī* after all this spiraling, after all this tremendous activity comes to rest, a little below the *mūlādhāra*, the lowest center where it is supposed to be dormant, asleep. Therefore, this sleeping

kuṇḍalinī is down below and the awakened *kuṇḍalinī* is on top. It's a beautiful thing and full of common sense. Unfortunately, we have made it into a scripture.

3 *Prāṇa*: The All-Pervading Energy

In the study and practice of *haṭha* yoga, the central and fundamental concept is *prāṇa*. Nothing really can be said about it because it is not something which can be objectified, described, and discussed. Its existence can be inferred. It can neither be proved nor disproved, but its effects can be known. You cannot see the air, but you know that if air was not there, you would not be able to breathe. You know that the branches of that tree swing because of the movement of air: you do not see itself, but you become aware of its existence by its functions.

Every form of energy that you may conceive of, think of, discover, describe in the cosmos is *prāṇa*. It is *prāṇa* whose movement or vibration in the cosmos gives rise to the world's appearance. That's simple, isn't it? Some agitation, some vibration, some movement of energy in the cosmos makes it possible for the elements to be formed in the first place. In the scientist's description of hydrogen as a rudimentary element that collides and collides, forming the most complicated elements or molecules, the force that brings about this collision is *prāṇa*.

That force that brings about this collision is *prāṇa*, so that what makes the grass green is *prāṇa*. The fundamental root elements colliding, creating molecules and then creating matter – although you call that *matter* in the end, in the beginning it was nothing but *prāṇa*. At one end of the stick, you call it *matter*, you call it *stone*. The stone is but a product, the beginning of which is movement, poor, sheer movement of energy in consciousness.

This *prāṇa* is as cosmic as consciousness, as omnipresent as consciousness, and non-different from consciousness. The entire universe is nothing but *cit śakti*: consciousness which is with energy inherent in it; consciousness plus energy – that makes it two, doesn't it? Can you forget this duality there and see it as consciousness, which is also energy, with the two being indivisibly together?

If you have been following even these few words a bit critically, you would have noticed that we are committed to this duality. When you say, „you and I are one", you are committed to the duality of you and I, and then you're struggling to create a sort of unity. That's the problem. Yoga is that realization which brings to an end this non-existent division.

Hence there is a lovely verse which occurs in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*:

> *Dve bīje cittavṛkṣasya vṛttivratatidhāriṇaḥ*
> *ekaṁ prāṇaparispando dvitīyaṁ dṛḍhabhāvanā* (5.91.14).

What is the mind? *Citta*. We are going to head on into it while we study *rāja* yoga. *Citta* is the mind – my mind. What are the roots, what are the seeds or the causes of this mind? Causes are two, says the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*. One is *prāṇaspandana*, that is movement of energy, movement of *prāṇa*. The second is *vāsana*. *Vāsana* is a notion. A notion is fundamentally non-different from consciousness, intelligence. You cannot have a notion which is devoid of intelligence, which is devoid of thought, which is devoid of consciousness. Nothing cannot entertain a notion of something. A non-entity cannot entertain a notion of entity, and unintelligent, inert and absolutely lifeless non-thinking substance, insentient substance,

cannot produce a song, a thought. That's simple, I think: where there is a notion, where there is a thought, where there is a concept, there is its own content, its own reality. Consciousness produces a limitation of itself.

We all use the word *soul*, we all use the word *self*, and we have somehow caught ourselves in a tight corner there, that in my heart there is a soul. There are even beautiful descriptions of it, just for your entertainment:

> *Aṅguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣaḥ*
> (*Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* 13.1).

How shall I conceive the soul to be? It is of the size of a newborn baby's thumb. You must go on looking at the newborn baby, and look at its thumb and measure it, see how long it is, and then – how tender, and how lovely it is, like a lotus petal, and then fix it in your mind, and go into your meditation room, visualize this there – a little baby's thumb … That's my soul!

After having described it in such earnestness and seriousness, the yogi much later tells you: „I gave this to you just for the sake of a focal point so that your mind may not wander wildly. It's not as though if you cut out my heart, you will find a baby's thumb there." It doesn't exist, but that was given to you to focus your attention. Then he goes on to say that your soul or your self is in the heart, but that is not your heart on the left side, which is the human, physical heart – the spiritual heart is on the *right* side!

I have a funny habit of looking at the words as from a different angle. *Soul* – *y*ou spell it *s-o-u-l*, but maybe it is only *c-e-l-l*. The spelling is slightly different, but the sound is similar. Is it possible therefore that what you and I have called a *soul* is nothing but a single cell?

Just a single cell is the root element, the sub-atomic particle, which is further indivisible, the absolute, final point of which there are infinite number in the universe. That cell is identical with the cosmic being, so there is consciousness and energy in it. These two being omnipresent, all-pervading, pervade the cell. You can visualize one of those sand particles on the beach in which there is both consciousness and energy. The consciousness in that as it were thinks: „I'm a particle of sand", and it becomes a particle of sand. That particle as it were thinks: „I am a chair", and it becomes a chair. That particle thinks: „I am a man", and it becomes a man. That particle thinks: „I am a woman"; it becomes a woman as it were. The consciousness or the intelligence in it is able to create this notion, and the energy that is inherent in this consciousness is able to fashion it immediately.

Everything in the universe is fashioned by energy, and since the energy is there in all things, in every cell, every atom of existence, it is immediately able to fashion the substance that is conceived of. That is the meaning of this innocent little verse. What are the seeds that bring about you as you and me as me, the dog as a dog, the tree as a tree? *Dve bīje cittavṛkṣasya*: there are these two causes, the two seeds. One is *prāṇaspandana*, movement of energy, and the other is *vāsana*, is a mysterious, self-limiting concept.

There is also a beautiful description of worlds within worlds. It's rather staggering and mind-boggling: Take a big statue of the Buddha. Before this statue was carved, it was a single, big, huge rock. You are the

sculptor, visualizing a huge figure of the Buddha. You are a devotee of Buddha, and so you're fashioning a huge, big statue of Buddha. Then your friend who is more commercially than devotionally inclined also looks at it and he says: „That's a beautiful stone! If you make this one, big statue, it wouldn't sell!" He is looking at at least 200 Buddhas in that one stone. And if someone else is interested in miniaturization, he looks at even that small Buddha and says: „Ha! I can carve it out and I can create a thousand of such little Buddhas!" So, it's possible for that single cell or soul to contain millions of others within itself, to conceive of millions of others within itself. And there's no end to it at that.

The movement of energy in that thought, *I am this, I am so-and-so, I am this much, I am this tall, I am this big, I am this heavy*, is mind. In this cell, there is a notion that I am limited: *I'm small*, *I'm this*, *I'm that* – or *I'm big*, and that notion is what is called *vāsana*. The notion is by definition self-limiting.

Citta is the sprout, the mind is the sprout. *Vāsana* is the seed for that sprout. And what is *vāsana*? The notion or the concept or the self-limiting idea that is built into every cell of that body, and which again is animated by *prāṇa*.

These two together therefore give rise to *citta*, the mind. It's important to understand this clearly, because quite a lot of what goes under the name of *positive thinking* proves to be ineffective because of that. We think that we think we think what we think. And then we wonder why all that positive thinking hasn't worked. We have not been thinking at all! We only think that we think. Thinking probably takes place at that level, the level of *vāsana*, at the level of the reality of the consciousness or the intelligence that fills every cell of your body. In other words: are you able to think at that level, at the cell level? Our thinking is extremely superficial, and therefore it is not able to produce any real effect at all.

So, I must go right down to the grassroots and bring about a change there. To bring about a total revolution or change, I must go over the fence called ego-sense, jump through, dive through the *citta*, come right down to this *vāsana* and change it there.

That is the microcosm. Consciousness, energy, and the movement of energy in consciousness is the macrocosm, the whole universe, and a cell, as it were, a particle of energy in this macrocosm, entertaining a self-limiting notion *this is I* becomes you and me, the individual. This microcosm is non-different, inseparable from the macrocosm, inseparable from the cosmos, but apparently functioning independently.

One thing more about this *prāṇa* before we come down to the individual. *Prāṇa* is energy, and one can see its various functions. At the cosmic level, it may be the force of gravitation. It is only with our own finite mind, which is fond of division, that we are seeing that the world, that the stars, the planets, are kept together by a force of gravitational pull. In the cosmos itself, probably there is no such force. It is just one, pure one, pure oneness. For instance, when you walk, your arm also comes with you. It's because it's one with you. There's no force pulling it together and keeping it glued to your shoulder. Looking at the cosmos from our own preconceived ideas or notions, one can say that the force of gravitation at work in the cosmos is a manifestation of *prāṇa*.

On a closer level, electromagnetism is also *prāṇa*. The energy inherent in physical substances is also *prāṇa*. In sentient beings, in which we can include not only the human and the animal but also the plant kingdom, natural sensitivity is *prāṇa*. Natural neurological response in the animals and the human is *prāṇa*. If you happen to touch something which is either too hot or too cold, the hand pulls away even before you know.

That is a tremendously simple, natural neurological response that is also the effect of *prāṇa*. „I was attacked by somebody when I was walking in the bush, and therefore I am afraid of all bushes" or „I'm afraid of all human beings" is not a natural neurological response. If someone gets up and grabs me by the throat, the natural neurological response will throw them out. But is it not natural neurological response later to look at someone with their hairstyle and run away from it. That is a perverted psychological response. Two wild dogs fight for a few minutes over a bone, over a piece of meat, but once the quarrel is over, this is forgotten. But you and me – probably your grandson will be fighting with my grandson!

So that sheer neurological response is also the manifestation of *prāṇa*. When you are standing on the edge of the chair, what is happening is the effect of *prāṇa*, natural neurological response. You are not afraid. When your mind looks at it, there is a psychological perversion, and then something else happens, fear takes over. If one is able to find a distinction between that natural neurological response and the perverted psychological fear, one is able to keep this fear away and not be frightened, to act naturally.

Only if we understand this, we also see why some of these great saints and sages might have had a sore on his arm and if they pressed it, they also howled. That's a pure and simple neurological response. It has nothing to do with fear, it has nothing to do with suffering as what you and I call *suffering*. All these are also manifestations of *prāṇa*.

Now we come to the individual. It's here that yoga has contributed tremendously. What is *prāṇa* in the individual, and how do I recognize it? Because, again, we have completely forgotten the real nature of *prāṇa*, the life force, and ignorantly identified *prāṇa* with breathing.

We see a dead body, and in India, they used to say: „His *prāṇa* has gone", its life-force has left the body. You look at it: The first notable difference is that it doesn't breathe, and therefore we call breathing *life-breath*. I don't know what else has left the body. I can only see that breathing has stopped, and so I've come to associate breathing with *prāṇa*. It's quite a simple equation.

But *prāṇa* is not just breathing. *Prāṇa* is what enables every cell of your being to live and to function. The yogis looked at the functions of this *prāṇa* closely, and in accordance with the several functions that the single *prāṇa* performs, they classified it into these five: *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *samāṇa*, *udāna,* and *vyāna*.

Breathing in and out is considered the function of *prāṇa*. The function of *apāna* is excretion, not only excretion of the feces and the urine and so on, but all manner of excretion. To the extent that the exhaled breath carries some sort of excretion with it, the function of *apāna* is involved.

Samāṇa is that which enables assimilation to take place, so that it is the carrier of nourishment to the very cells of the body. *Udāna* means *lift up*, and it is said that *udāna* is that force which enables you to walk. I hope you appreciate that these yogis are supposed to have been terribly unscientific, superstitious, and silly people. They realized that the gravity of the earth pulls you down all the time, and they must have questioned: how then are you able to walk? What is the difference between you and a stone? If the earth's force of gravity pulls you down, that's it, you stand there like a tree. How to be able to walk? It is the *udāna* that enables you to tear your foot away from the floor and advance. Beautiful!

Vyāna literally means *pervading*, *pervasive*, *all-pervading*. It is *vyāna* that enables the blood to be circulated, and the energy to be circulated throughout the body.

Prāṇa is formed everywhere in this universe, in all things in the universe, not only in food, in water, or in the air, but everywhere, throughout. As long as the *prāṇa* in the individual functions without interference, without perversion, that *prāṇa* can absorb the *prāṇa* that is inhaled through the air and consumed through food and drink. It is a self-perpetuating mechanism.

But to assimilate the *prāṇa* from food and drink, the *prāṇa* in this body has to work. There is an expenditure involved in this action, in the activity of digestion, in the activity of assimilation. That's the only problem with this machine: it works, and in its working, it has to spend *prāṇa*. Eating and drinking, digesting and assimilating is activity, which involves expenditure of *prāṇa*.

Of course, in the food that is eaten, in the water that is drunk, in the air that is breathed in, there is *prāṇa*, and therefore that *prāṇa* replenishes the *prāṇa* which is expended, but little by little, we seem to be losing. When the energy that animates this body is so low that it cannot replenish itself anymore, no amount of food or tonic is able to perpetuate it. Then the *apāna* takes over. The *apāna* is excretion and at that stage, the entire body is fit to be excreted. That is why the *apāna* is considered the manifestation of death.

There is also a theory that *prāṇa* is not recharged by eating and drinking. Eating and drinking provide our cells with the material substance. From where do we get the energy to fill those molecules, the cells? Sleep! It is graceful! It is from sleep that we derive energy. The *prāṇa* income is mainly from sleep. In the case of meditators, it is meditation that puts you in touch with the source of *prāṇa*.

Sleep or meditation is the first and the greatest source of *prāṇa*. The second is breathing. The third source is water, plain and simple water, and lastly, food. In the case of food, a lot of energy is expended in digesting and assimilating it, so that the quantity of *prāṇa* that is derived from it is not much greater than the amount of *prāṇa* necessary to digest it.

Why is it that we derive maximum energy or *prāṇa* during sleep and in meditation? Because the ego-inference is minimal. It is the ego that stands as a barrier between the source and the body. The less the ego-interference with our life, the greater the energy, the less the loss of energy.

Terribly oversimplifying it: the source of *prāṇa* is beyond the ego-sense, so any state of consciousness which is beyond the ego-sense must be a source of *prāṇa*. Sleep is beyond the ego-sense, so it's a source

of *prāṇa*. Meditation must be beyond the ego-sense, so through that, *prāṇa* is gained. Any ego-motivated action is a drain, and therefore all emotions are a drain, emotions being the reaction of the ego all the time, by definition. The externalized movement of energy is emotion, *e-motion*. Any haphazard or disorderly movement of energy is also ego-based and therefore drain on energy.

How to know which activities drain the energy more than others? Watch your breathing: the activity in which there is greater loss of energy produces agitated breathing, labored breathing. Activity which puts you in touch with the source of *prāṇa* is accompanied by a rhythmic, graceful, and almost imperceptible movement of breath.

I feel that this bother of breathing in and breathing out was not meant merely to ventilate the lungs and oxygenate the blood. Perhaps the breathing process was meant to indicate the state of your mind, the state of your emotional being, the state of your consciousness and the state of your *prāṇa*, whether you are gaining or losing *prāṇa*. If you watch your breathing, you will know.

If there is strain and you're more conscious of the body, then you are not conscious of that intelligence within that is able to do that. If you're straining to lift a stone, you are terribly conscious of the superficial parts of your body, your muscles, your shoulders and your arms, so that at that point it is not possible for you to be aware of what goes on deep within you.

Please try one thing, just for a few minutes. Merely observe one fine, little detail. It doesn't matter how your breathing is, it doesn't matter if you are awake, alert, tired, nothing matters. Watching the inhalation and the exhalation, ask yourself one simple question: at what point does the inhalation stop and turn into exhalation and at what precise moment does exhalation turn into inhalation?

Please keep your eyes open. Look at a point, but don't close your eyes – that's all, in a beautiful way. You are not aware of your breathing at all because you are looking for that moment: „When does it change, when does it change?". You are not tense, you are not agitated. If you are tense, if you are agitated, you are not aware of what goes on.

As long as the ego is active, there is tension and there is lack of awareness because the ego is faced outward. So, I'm more aware of the body, I'm more aware of the surroundings, I'm less aware of the mind and what is behind the mind, and therefore the source of *prāṇa*.

There is flow of *prāṇa* from the source, but because it passes through this filter called *ego*, it gets distorted, and therefore there is agitated movement of *prāṇa*. You may call it *deep breathing*, but it is not deep, it's tense. Deep breathing is when you are not even conscious that you're breathing. That's why most yoga teachers ask you not to pay too much attention to the breathing while doing all those postures. Breathe in and out calmly, normally.

4 Purificatory Practices

If we follow the philosophical basis of *haṭha* yoga, it is not difficult to see how what we call *the physical* was originally pure spirit, and perhaps is pure spirit even now. If you will tolerate a Biblical parallel: God created everything out of himself, because if God alone was in the beginning, whatever was created was created out of his own substance. God created Adam. Adam, as a part of God, has become an individual. That's what the Vedāntīns call *ātmā*; *ātmā* and Adam are both the same. Then God takes rest, and Adam goes to sleep, which means that he falls into a state of ignorance.

Then comes his companion, out of himself, called Eve. Now the man who is the child of God suddenly becomes the husband of this girl. The identity is lost, and an identification is formed. Self-knowledge is lost and the loss of self-knowledge immediately gives rise to an identification. If I don't know who I am, I must immediately call myself an Indian, a Hindu, and all that sort of thing.

When the man who was originally God, and later the son of God and the husband of Eve is thrown out of the Garden of Eden, if you believe all that story, he becomes a farmer, he becomes the father of children. From there, this identification moves further and further away from the truth.

But if God is omnipresent, no one can run away from God. If the truth, if this consciousness, cosmic consciousness, cosmic being is omnipresent, is infinite, one can never go completely away from the infinite, or the cosmic being, or cosmic consciousness. That is probably what Christian theology tried to prove by saying that Adam was not completely banished from the Garden of Eden, that he didn't get completely lost: the same Adam in Jesus is supposed to have been awakened to the truth.

When is that possible? When you're able to throw the flesh away as though it didn't matter: crucifixion of the flesh. If you're prepared to forget this flesh, forget this materiality, then it is possible to recapture the true spirit. Somehow, we have come to identify ourselves with the flesh, and the process of yoga is the purification of the whole thing and getting back to the source.

A little movement of energy creates a collision and fusion within that cosmic consciousness, within that cosmic being, and the energy colliding and fusing the basic element, the hydrogen atom, brings about greater and greater combinations, grosser and grosser combinations, till eventually you find this body in this world. As this proceeds, the identity is forgotten. Self-knowledge is forgotten, and this forgetfulness of self-knowledge immediately creates identification. I think this is important to remember. When I lose my identity, I want to identify myself with something or other. When I suddenly wake up in a strange place, I immediately want to create some kind of relationship. I want to identify myself with something or other, so that I feel secure, foolishly.

Thus, matter is formed and thus, we seem to exist, and we cling to some notion or other, in an effort to identify ourselves. You can see that in the case of every one of us. We started as a baby, completely free: a little infant could be taken away by anybody! It doesn't bother.

Then that purity is somehow lost. You tell that little infant that „I am your mommy and he's your daddy". The little one is forced into relationship and pulled away from its center. Then for some time the child

identifies itself as the child of Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so, and as it grows up, suddenly this relationship is lost. The identity is not lost. I am still I; I have not lost my identity! But then, the identification is shifting. The parents are not so important now, my schoolmates are so important. My father and my mother may still be there, I am still what I was, and I continue to be what I am. But in my own heart, in my own mind, in my own consciousness, the notion that I am the son of So-and-so is weakened greatly, and *I am the friend of So-and-so* gains strength.

I grow, and I develop a more intimate relationship with one particular person to whom I become the boyfriend or the husband, so that the parental relationship is nearly completely submerged, they almost look strangers now, the friends are no longer friends but acquaintances – I knew them some time ago: „Ah, we were classmates, weren't we?" -- because there is a more realistic identification with this one person. And this identification goes on changing and changing.

The answer to the question „How was it possible for this omnipresent, omnipotent and cosmic being to forget itself and to become this flesh?" is as simple as that. How was it possible for this child who was clinging to the father and mother, to throw them completely out of its consciousness and come to identify itself with someone else, a total stranger whom he had not met before at all? In the same way, this consciousness is able to progressively forget its identity and to become involved in identification with the mind, with the limitation – mind means limitation, a conditioned notion – and this particular physical body, with its life-force, with its own inherent notions.

Yoga recognizes the entire process without merely saying: „All that is rubbish." People have tried that trick also, to see that the entire universe is nothing but consciousness and energy, *cit śakti*, even now. Why labor on the physical body and so on? Forget it and go right back to the source. This may be a bit difficult for most of us.

Since the whole process of identification seems to have taken place, it's better to transform or transmute every aspect of this identification and roll the whole thing back to the source. That is what is called yoga. And so, since the identification has descended right down to the level of the physical being, pay some attention to that, without getting completely lost in it. I hope you will not forget: without getting completely lost in it, so that even the practices of *haṭha* yoga are not meant to rectify the liver. You know: *liver āsana*, and *spleen āsana* …

Why not? There's no harm. There is an *āsana* called *pādahastāsana*. *Pāda* means foot, *hasta* means hand; *pādahastāsana* is where you hold your foot with your hand. So that is allowed – why not *liver āsana*, why not *spleen āsana*, why not *thigh-hold āsana*? It doesn't matter what it is called, as long as I realize that though in these practices the physical body seems to be involved, it is merely to purify the physical body and go right back to the source.

Hence, the author of *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* makes it very clear right in the beginning. He says: „I'm teaching *haṭha* yoga in order to prepare you for the practice of *rāja* yoga, or meditation" – a truth that is hardly remembered in the wonderful modern world. It's a lovely verse, nearly the first verse in the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*. The second verse – the first is the invocation, of course:

Praṇamya śrī guruṁ nāthaṁ svātmārāmeṇa yoginā kevalaṁ rāja yogāya haṭha vidyopadiśyate (1.2).

„After having saluted my guru", the yogi Svātmārāma – Svātmārāma is the author of the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* – expounds *haṭha yoga vidya kevalaṁ rāja-yoga*: „only to the purpose of the practice of *rāja* yoga", so that it is not meant as a sort of health-gimmick or slimming exercise. These are incidental to the spiritual benefit that one derives from the *haṭha* yoga practices.

In the *Bhagavad Gītā* also, Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentions this very specifically: „Why does one practice yoga at all?" He doesn't mention *haṭha* yoga. Why does one practice yoga at all, even the yoga of meditation? *Ātmaviśuddhaye* (6.12): „in order that one may purify oneself", cleanse the mirror. If the mirror is cleaned, then the truth is reflected without any further effort. When the mirror is clean, the truth is reflected. When your heart is clean, the truth is reflected in it without any further effort.

Haṭha yoga has a few components, and we have another lovely scripture here, called *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*, where the purpose of the various practices is given:

Ṣaṭ-karma ṇā śodhanaṃ āsanena bhaved dṛḍham
mudrayā sthiratā caiva pratyāhāreṇa dhairyatā
prāṇāyāmā lāghavaṃ ca 'dhyānāt pratyakṣam ātmani
samādhinā nirliptaṃ ca 'muktir eva na saṃśayaḥ (1.10-11).

These are the seven components of *haṭha* yoga. „Purification is acquired by the regular performance of the *ṣaṭ-kriyā*s" – we'll come to that in a minute. Self-purification is gained by purificatory practices. *Āsana* or posture does *dṛḍhata* or *stability*. No more than that! It's not slimming or fattening or suppleness – none of those things is mentioned here.

Therefore, in *rāja* yoga, in the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali, you have the description of the posture as *sthira-sukham āsanam* (2.46). The posture must be comfortable in which you can sit for quite a considerable time, and it must be firm, *sthiram*.

The third *haṭha* yoga practice, which is *mudrā*, gives *sthirata* or *steadiness*. The fourth is *pratyahara*; it gives *dhairyata* or *calmness*, *perseverance*. *Prāṇāyāma* gives lightness, enlightenment! You feel light, you don't feel heavy, not only physically, but psychologically, neurologically, and also spiritually. You are able to go through life without feeling life a burden. *Dhyāna* or meditation gives *pratyakṣa* or direct realization of the self.

Samādhi brings about freedom: *nirliptaṃ ca 'muktir eva na saṃśayaḥ*. *Nirliptaṃ* also means *non-attachment*. The yogi who has experienced *samādhi* is not attached to anything. He doesn't want to touch anything, he doesn't want to look at anything, he's un-attached. Attachment implies duality, attachment presupposes a division. So, the yogi's non-attachment, *samādhi*, that he experiences in *samādhi* is a realization of cosmic oneness.

When you and I are forever one in this cosmic being in which there is no division, then there is neither an attraction nor an aversion, there is neither what you call *love*, nor what you call *hate*. It seems one great saint of India, Ramdas, once said that to love all is to love none in particular.

So those are the seven *haṭha* yoga practices, and their benefits are given in this lovely little text called *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*. Even if we are not really interested in these practices, I think it's good to become acquainted with them, put them on the record and leave them there.

The first are the purificatory exercises, known as the *ṣaṭ-kriyā*s. Both the texts on *haṭha* yoga mention them. In the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, there's a beautiful verse:

> *Yatheṣṭaṃ dhāraṇaṃ vāyor analasya pradīpanam*
> *nādābhivyaktir ārogyaṃ jāyate nāḍī-śodhanāt (*2.20*)*.

„If the physical body is rid of toxic substances, it is possible to hold the breath for as long as you like. The impediments to the practice of *prāṇāyāma* are removed." It's obvious that these are necessary only if you are going to practice *prāṇāyāma* at least eight or twelve to sixteen hours a day. If you are going to be so much devoted to the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, these purificatory *kriyā*s are desirable.

Analasya pradīpanam: „The six *kriyā*s that we are going to describe also promote the vitality of the gastric fire", which means, your digestion and your assimilation improves. Not because I want to eat a few more pancakes, but because I can do with half: whatever little is consumed, is fully assimilated.

Analasya pradīpanam nādābhivyaktiḥ: Haṭha yoga believes in what is known as listening to the inner sounds. If the body is completely purified, rid of all toxins, the inner hearing becomes acute, clear, and therefore there is clairaudience. *Clairaudience* in simple words means *clear ability to listen*. *Ārogyaṃ*: and of course the physical body is also restored to perfect health.

Now comes another important verse:

> *meda-śleṣmādhikaḥ pūrvaṃ ṣaṭ-karmāṇi samācaret*
> *anyas tu nācaret tāni doṣāṇāṃ samabhāvataḥ* (2.21).

„If you find that your body is phlegmatic" – phlegmatic not only in the sense of the respiratory tract being full of phlegm, but also in the sense of being irritable, fat, lazy, lethargic – then, he says, better take to the practice of these purificatory *kriyā*s. Otherwise, don't do it, this is! *Anyas tu nācaret*: if that is not there, don't try this trick! If you're lean and thin and slim, and if you do not suffer from phlegm: better not do it. *Doṣāṇāṃ samabhāvataḥ*: otherwise, you may run into other difficulties. That's simple, isn't it? If you are constipated, it's good to take some laxative, let's say. But if you're already having diarrhea, it is rather unwise to get into laxative stuff.

> *Dhautir bastis tathā netis trāṭakaṃ naulikaṃ tathā*
> *kapāla-bhātiś caitāni ṣaṭ-karmāṇi pracakṣate* (2.22).

Dhauti, *basti*, *neti*, *trāṭakam*, *nauli*, *kapālabhāti* – these are the six practices that are recommended for the practice of those who wish to devote themselves to the practice of *prāṇāyāma* particularly.

Dhauti literally means *cleansing*. It has been described as cleansing of the intestinal tract and the stomach. I've seen it and I also tried once or twice; I'm afraid I'm not very fond of it. A piece of cloth is swallowed and then pull it out. It absorbs all the filth in your stomach, and when you pull it out, it's all out. But then, you might put some more into your stomach very soon. That's where the problem lies. That is *vastra dhauti*.

Or you can drink a minimum of ten glasses of water, slightly warm with a little salt in it. Keep on drinking, and it has got to come out. If it doesn't come out, tickle your throat, and you'll bring it all up. I believe it is good and I know of quite a number of people who swear by it. It may good for some and it may not be good for some! I must relate myself to it: do I, does this body need that? So, one must be cautious.

There are some who drink air as you drink water and then belch it up. It's also called *plāvinī prāṇāyāma*. The function doesn't seem to be very different from the stomach-pump. When the stomach-pump is there, why would you bother about all this? If you find in the commencement of your practice that your system needs this kind of cleansing and purification, it may be a good idea. Logically, if you want to clean your intestines, your stomach and your alimentary canal to begin with, then I suppose you'd be extraordinarily careful from then on, what you put into this stomach. To do all these things and then to eat the usual food and fill up with rubbish again doesn't make much sense.

Also, there is *agnisāra dhauti*: Pump your abdomen vigorously, and this generates heat in the body, and that heat also gets rid of a little rubbish that there may be in the stomach. The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* also mentions other forms of cleansing: cleaning and washing your teeth, cleaning your tongue and cleaning your throat.

The next is *basti*. *Basti* is literally *enema*. I have seen one person do it; a picture of the occasion is published in Swami Sivananda's book *Hatha Yoga*. This young man walked into the Ganges, sat down, squatting inside the water, did some *nauli* and *uḍḍīyana, uḍḍīyana nauli*, with which he was able to suck water up into the large intestines. He did a little bit of *nauli* again and then pumped the water out. Sitting in water is called *jala basti*, and sitting on land and doing it is called *sthala-basti*. *Sthala* is *ground*, *earth*.

For *neti*, you stick a thread through your nostrils, pull the thread out through the mouth. It's fairly easy and it can be helpful if you have some nasal problems. There are also quite a few techniques of sniffing water. Sniffing water through the nose is considered to be quite healthy, to clear the sinuses and cure a headache. It is also said to be good for your eyes, as they are related to the sinuses. There is even a very special form of jug with a spout for it. You stick it into one nostril, pour in water and clean the nostrils. This is also a very good practice if you need it.

Nauli is churning of the abdomen. You practice *uḍḍīyana*, pull the abdomen up and let this abdomen be isolated, churning it. Here it is given as one of the purificatory practices, and later it is also given as a practice meant to awaken the *kuṇḍalinī*. It's a very lovely, beautiful practice.

Then there is *trāṭaka*, *staring*. It's how you clean the eyeballs. When you keep staring for a considerable period, the eyes are beginning to water. Again, I realize something marvelous here: I don't have to bother about it! The I does not have to bother about it. If the eyeballs need to be flushed and cleaned, there is something deep within that knows. The texts do mention specifically that: „Keep staring, keep the eyes open, keep staring till tears pour down the eyes." If people weep a lot, I suppose it is not necessary.

The last is *kapālabhāti*. It's often given as one of the *prāṇāyāma* exercises, but I think it is good to remember that it's not a breathing exercise, but a purificatory exercise. That seems to be the essential difference between *kapālabhāti* and *bhastrikā. Bhastrikā* we shall discuss when we come to *prāṇāyāma*. *Kapāla* means *skull*, *bhāti* is *to shine*. *Kapālabhāti* is *that which makes your skull shine,* internally, not by shaving and applying oil on it! *Kapālabhāti* is what makes the skull shine internally or, in a manner of speaking, it is cleansing of the brain cells. You're not bothered about the lungs and the oxygenation, the inhalation and exhalation; you are blowing the impurities of the brain out.

These are the six purificatory practices mentioned in the *haṭha* yoga texts. As I mentioned earlier, these practices are excellent, if they are needed and if one is keen on taking to the practice of *haṭha* yoga very seriously, especially the *prāṇāyāma* part of it. According to the basic *haṭha* yoga texts, another *prāṇāyāma* is prescribed as *nāḍī śuddhi*. All these are also supposed to be *nāḍī śuddhi*, that is the purification of your vital being, vital aspect of your personality.

Another practice is given, which may be regarded as mystic, as in this practice, it is the inner attitude, inner feeling that is vital. It seems to have tremendous, wonderful effect and it's quite simple; quite simple, but it is effective only if there is deep visualization, deep imagination, deep feeling for it. We sit in the usual meditation posture, whatever that may be, and you may chant *Oṁ*, to begin with. The philosophy or the psychology behind it is that there is not only toxicity in the purely physical sense, but ignorance and confusion. It is that confusion that has brought about the identification with the physical body which in its turn has brought about the impurity in the body. So instead of approaching it from the purely physical angle, we approach it from the psychic angle, from the inward angle with this method for achieving self-purification, which is called *nāḍī śuddhi*, the purification of the *nāḍī*s.

All the impurities must be destroyed, burned, and in a manner of speaking, the whole body is impure. But I also realize that hidden in this impurity, there is a pure self or consciousness. You don't want to throw the baby with the bath water: first save the baby and then throw the bathwater out.

The first step consists in withdrawing the soul, the *jīva*. The *jīva* is for this purpose visualized as being seated at the base of the spine, at the *mūlādhāra*, and from there, you take the *jīva* symbolically up to be seated on top.

As soon as that is visualized, the second step is to visualize whatever evil qualities or whatever defects and whatever weaknesses there may be in me, I visualize all that concentrated in the splenic region, in the left side of the abdomen, as a dark force, a cloud. It's better to visualize it clearly and completely.

Some people do not do that. They say: „Now that you have withdrawn the self or the *jīva* to the crown of the head, let the whole body be burnt to ashes.“ The principle is the same.

This visualization is made as realistic as possible, only then it works. Then you inhale through the left nostril, mentally repeating the word *yam*. They have got all sorts of regulations for it, that you must inhale to 16 *yam*s and hold the breath for 64 and exhale 32. If you can do it – wonderful, if you cannot do it, also wonderful! It's the actual, direct visualization that is most important. That we shall discuss when we come to these *cakra*s.

Yam is the mantra which invokes the air. As you inhale and hold, entertain the feeling within yourself that this air mantra lets loose a gale, and that wind blows, dries up all this evil, or the whole body, whichever you like. Then exhale through the right.

In the next round, as you inhale through the right, the mantra that is mentally repeated is *ram*. *Ram* is the mantra for fire, the fire at the solar plexus. While repeating the mantra *ram* mentally – again 16 times inhalation, 64 times holding, 32 times exhaling – you visualize that this mantra generates a tremendous fire which destroys all this evil. Why are you worried about all that? It's a tremendously powerful self-hypnotic practice.

Let's take for instance that I'm impulsive, short-tempered. That I visualize, or anxiety, fear, whatever you want to overcome. Whatever it is I that I want to get rid of, burn, is visualized clearly. And then this mantra generates a fire. We have seen fire burning, and you find the whole body being burnt, or the evil forces getting burnt. Luckily for us it's what even you call *gastric fire*, so it's easy to visualize a fireplace going, near the abdomen. It's nice, easy, simple. Some yogis even recommend that when you exhale through the left nostril after this *ram*, you feel that the ashes are being blown out.

You exhale through the left nostril and if you are using the whole body, the whole body has been reduced to ashes, or the evil has been reduced to ashes. Then inhale through the left, and this time you're asked to meditate upon the top of the palate and visualize the lunar orbit there, the moon: cool, lovely, showering nectar. Mentally we repeat the mantra *ṭham*. While doing that, you feel that it's like the moon rays are being showered into your whole system, reviving it, giving it a new shape. All of the old, evil personality has gone, a new body is taking shape. Instead of the word *ṭham* you can use the word *vam,* both mean the same thing.

Then exhale through the right, and the next time you inhale through the right you continue with that, continue with *vam*. *Vam* is the *bījā* for water as well as for nectar. The old body has been destroyed, a new, pure body has been created.

Exhale through the left, inhale through the left, lastly using the syllable *lam* for *land* or *earth* in the same way: Inhale, hold and exhale, and while holding, you visualize that after all these past impurities have been destroyed, this new, pure body is solid and ready for yoga practice.

When that part of purification is over, you drop your hands on your lap and with the mantra *soham* bring that soul back to the *mūlādhāra*. This is the mystic practice of *haṭha* yogis.

5 *Āsana*: The Discovery of Stillness in Activity

After the *kriyā*s come the *āsana*s. The two basic *haṭha* yoga texts we are looking into do not mention most of the *āsana*s that we practice. Of the popular *āsana*s that are practiced every day, only three or four are mentioned. *Paścimottānāsana* is mentioned, somewhere *śalabhāsana* and *bhujaṅgāsana* are mentioned, *dhanurāsana*. Except these, they concentrate more on the sitting posture, because the *āsana*s are basically meant for *prāṇāyāma* and meditation.

Swami Sivananda himself practiced and advocated just a few *āsana*s. He liked to do *śīrṣāsana*. He could do it only on the tie board. When you draw a triangle mentally, the hands occupy the two angles, lower down, and the head on the other angle, that's all. And then he used to stand upside down for a little while. *Sarvāṅgāsana* he liked, in a manner of speaking. From there he would go down to something like *halāsana* and hold that posture for a few seconds. Sometimes I've seen him do the *matsyāsana* and the *paścimottānāsana*.

Sarvāṅgāsana is what you people unfortunately call *shoulderstand*. It's not shoulderstand. It's *sarva aṅga*, which means it is something which brings into play *all the parts of the body*. *Matsyāsana* is called *fish posture*. These are the few that he used to do, and sort of his own version of the spinal twist, not very difficult. And these are the only ones he usually recommended for our own daily practice. The others have elaborated and complicated, which is nice! If you are to do them, it's very good.

Why do we practice these yoga postures and how do they differ from mere gymnastics? That's something worth looking into and understanding.

In the famous trick of standing at the edge of a chair, your calf muscles and the thighs are tightening up. There's a compensation taking place from moment to moment. The phenomenon can be looked at from two completely different angles. One looks at it from the energy point of view and the intelligence point of view: What is that intelligence in the body that is able to balance and to maintain the balance? The other, the gymnast, looks at it this way: when the body is threatened, there is strength, the calf muscles and the thighs become tight. And he says: „Make the whole body tight, s*trengthen* it!"

What exactly does *strength* mean? I have seen lean, thin porters in Delhi goods sheds about one-third your size, not more than that, maybe one-fourth, who are able just to roll a huge packet, probably half a ton, on their shoulders and take it off as if it was a featherweight. In these Japanese martial arts, a tiny little girl is able to cope with a huge, hefty, strong man, really tipping him over.

This is how the yogis looked at it: There is something within, which is called the *prāṇa*, and which in Chinese is called *chi* and in Tibetan it's called *li*. The strength is not muscular, but the strength is of the *prāṇa* or the energy within. The gymnast looked at it as from the muscular angle. Who is right and who is wrong, we are not discussing here.

Therefore, while practicing the yoga *āsana*s, the yogi tries to discover the intelligence beyond the me, which is able to maintain the body, balance the body, to bring about the necessary adjustments in the body from moment to moment in all these yoga postures. If that is done, you discover something

marvelous: that there is a built-in intelligence in every cell of your body, capable of looking after the body, bringing on pain, bringing on illness and death if need be, which presides over life and death, which does not make any distinction between these, which does not divide life, cut life up into all these bits and pieces, which looks at life as a whole. It's marvelous, if one is able to look at it that way. When doing some postures, see if you can note the difference.

That is the basic idea of the yoga postures. If they are done in this manner, the practice of the yoga *āsana*s becomes a continuous meditation, a dynamic meditation. And then you also learn that meditation needs not necessarily mean sitting bolt upright in a chair, on your meditation mat. There's something deep within that can be in a state of meditation, whether or not the body is still. You discover that the body inwardly is never still. The blood circulation is going on, the lungs are working, the nerves are working, everything is working! Stillness does not mean an inert, unmoving state, but stillness is a state of the spirit – I won't call it *mind* – which exists in spite of tremendous physical activity, and perhaps mental activity, too – perhaps.

The discovery of that is the purpose of yoga *āsana*s: the discovery of that inner stillness which co-exists with intense physical activity. Then you don't complain: „I don't have time to meditate." You have discovered the key which transforms your whole life into meditation. You don't grumble and grouse against a little pain, a little illness, a little sickness, and the shadow of death; to you, this whole thing looks a lovely painting, a portrait in which there are dark shades and light shades, different shades of the same color. You don't protest against a dark shade in the painting, it's good, and therefore in the same way your mind does not rebel against what is called *illness*, what is called *old age*.

You see that that intelligence is capable of looking after this body, and in the eyes of that intelligence, health and illness, life and death are not different, antagonistic features. Life is continuous. At some stage, someone looks at it and calls it *health*, at another stage, someone looks at it and calls it *sickness*; at one stage you call it *life*, at another stage you call it *death*.

If you absorb that, you immediately see that this state of health looks upon all these as mere superficial symptoms which do not touch that life. It's the life that created all this, produced all this. Therefore, the yogi initially values what you call *physical health*. If that initial health is not there, that illness acts as a barrier which prevents you from seeing this life-stream within yourself. You cannot meditate, you cannot look within, you cannot transcend the ego-barrier unless in the initial stages, till you come face to face with the spirit beyond the me, the body, the nerves and the mind are not in the state of health.

In a state of health, the body is able to take care of itself, which means it does not need your attention. You can go beyond it and look into the spirit within the body. In a state of health, you do not even realize you have a body. As long as there is no trouble, you do not even feel that you have a heart. As long as they are healthy, you do not know that you have lungs. This is marvelous! If only we can meditate on this message, our whole life will be much better.

These vital organs perform such vital functions without that we knew that they even exist. They don't look for thanks and gratitude; you can mess them up. They don't interfere and obstruct your vision in the utter state of health. That is the only reason why the yogi looks for physical health.

When you put these two together, that health is a state of inner being, not demonstrable in musculature, and that it is an intelligence beyond the me, then you're looking for secrets of health deep within the body, not outside. The yoga *āsana*s act mostly upon the nerves and upon the powerhouse of all these nerves, the brain, and the endocrine system. If we need harmony, the hormones should work harmoniously. Only the spelling seems to be different, but the idea is the same in *hormones* and *harmony*!

By doing the postural stretch or the *cakra āsana*s and so on, you cannot act on the endocrines – that's not possible. But when you squeeze for instance the neck, naturally there is rush of blood to the neck, and also the attention is intensely concentrated on the neck, and in this commotion, the thyroid gland is benefited. By all this indirect activity around the thyroid gland, the thyroid gland is nourished, and its health restored.

We're not medical people, we're not interested in all that. It has been experienced by generations of practitioners of yoga that these postures have a beneficial influence upon the states of one's mind. That's all we know: these have a definite influence upon the states of one's mind, one's psychological states. If these psychological states are to some extent dependent upon the hormones, then obviously there has been some effect on the hormones. We don't have to perform autopsies in order to find out what's happening where.

Most of the yoga postures concentrate most of their attention upon the backbone. Either you bend the backbone forward or backward, or twist it, turn, do whatever you like. The yogi is normally not terribly keen on other parts of the anatomy – how they look and what they look like. That's up to you.

Let's have a look at some postures. Do *uḍḍīyana bandha,* drawing the stomach up. If you hold it for some time, what happens? Does the stomach become tense or does your mind become tense? Can you stop the mind from becoming tense?

Can you realize that it is the abdominal muscles doing this? Watch your brain to see that you're not getting all that worked up. If the brain or the mind is tense, you cannot watch. It's impossible. You cannot observe what's going on and you cannot realize that the body in itself is capable of doing all that.

Try a little more complicated one. Again, the secret is to see from within that it is the body that does this, or the intelligence in the body that does it. If you bring the brain into it, the brain only feels anxious, or tense, worried. Otherwise, the headstand is easy! See: You come up with the back, and then the legs go up. They go up, and what holds them up? Not your brain. Throwing the leg up is easy.

Pedal on the floor. Straighten, tighten your knees. The thing to watch and to see is: it is the body that does all that. What is the mind doing? Am I doing it with the mind? Am I getting worried? –Watch and

then straighten your legs. Look at your shoulders, look at your elbows. Look at that little bit of anxiety building in the solar plexus – when there's no need, the body is performing the yoga posture.

Then you do probably the most complicated yoga posture without intention. If the anxiety is not there, the body is able to look after itself. I'm not saying that you can do everything. If the anxiety is not there and the body is unable to do a certain thing, it will refuse to do it, it will collapse and fall down and take care of itself again, like a baby. Anxiety produces tension. The anxiety stops, prevents, the natural intelligence in the body from flowing through.

You begin to watch what's happening. While you are doing the fish posture, lying down and bending your back, you suddenly realize that it is the lungs that are breathing. If the lungs are breathing, why should there be an unnecessary movement, exaggerated movement in the chest? As you watch deeper and deeper and deeper within yourself, the breathing becomes deep, but calm, non-agitated, non-violent. The chest stays high.

In the triangle, all your attention focuses itself upon the organ where there is the greatest tension. There is a lot of tension in the mind, and this is how tension is produced in the body. When in the triangle pose, you stand with your legs apart, bowing to one side, there is tension building up in one foot. Then shift your attention onto the other foot: what is that other foot doing? It must be doing something to compensate! So instead of getting worked up about the limb that is aching, I think of the limb that is not aching. Push that foot out. Immediately this tension goes away.

Do the triangle. Make it as difficult as possible for yourself. Only then you experience this. While tension builds up on your right foot, shift the attention to the left one. If you shift your attention there, your body will straighten itself. Immediately you feel that the pressure on your right foot is lessening. Your mind seems to flow to your left foot, and then you're completely relaxed.

Because of a wrong approach to the whole problem of life, we think to get hung up on a problem, a pain. The mind is so deeply involved in that painful spot that the natural balancing trick the intelligence in the body is capable of is prevented from functioning. We are supposed to be intelligent, thinking human beings, and because we think, we get into trouble.

Forcing in a yoga posture defeats its purpose. If you apply force, it defeats its purpose because in a violent movement, the brain is clouded, the mind is anxious, frightened, and so nothing happens. If the same yoga posture is done with great gentleness and inward concentration, feeling, attention, then there is no tension. You suddenly begin to discover the beauty that the body is inside, deep within yourself, and how that intelligence is capable of managing its own affairs, as long as there is no anxiety to do or not to do.

If for instance, I am standing at the edge of the chair, at a certain stage, if I'm merely watching, I'm not doing anything, I'm merely watching. And when does one topple over? When one is not watching and when one challenges the body to do this. When I want to show off, I tell her: „Oh, I can stand on my toe on top of this microphone!", that is when I fall.

The intelligence is never, never wrong. It's never asleep. If we become sensitive to that intelligence, then it doesn't allow us to go astray. That's also another a type of vicious circle: I become sensitive, and then I become aware about what it is, I become aware of it and then I become sensitive. Where do I start? Somewhere now I must start. Somewhere now, I must cut this vicious circle and become more and more aware of the workings of this intelligence. I learn to listen to it, I learn to live in tune with it, not to fight it anymore, knowing that it's right.

Reason comes afterwards, to justify what the intuition said before. Because if you try to solve all these problems created by people's thinking, along very rational lines, you go on telling me that my reasoning is wrong, and obviously I'm going to tell you that your reasoning is wrong. Is a problem created by this kind of wrong reasoning going to be solved by somebody else giving another reasoning?

And yet you see that in spite of all this mess, life goes on. Life goes on because it doesn't think. I guess that's the whole purpose of the practice of these yoga *āsana*s. Can I discover somewhere that something which baffles my brain, my mind? If the *āsana*s are done that way, I'm adoring. I adore God, or the creator, and I'm paying tribute to him: „You're a very nice chap. I would never have been able to build a body like this!" It could be a form of worship, it could be a form of adoration, it could be a form of meditation, and eventually it could be a form of self-discovery.

Something interesting is that the texts which give these yoga *āsana*s do not even mention how you get there. They only give you a picture of the final posture and you get to it somehow or other. That's another important thing which is often overlooked: you must get into the posture, stay there till all the initial commotion comes to an end, that is, till the body has had time to re-adjust and regain its normalcy. In other words: for the rest of your life, you are prepared to stay in that posture.

Even if it is mentioned here that the yogi overcomes this and that, and all diseases are cured, they are mentioning it as a sort of fringe result of the main result of yoga. It's like saying that if you see God, your headache will go away. Seeing God is the important thing! But when you do that, probably some of these things are taken care of. In Biblical terminology: if you have this, then all things will be added unto you (*Matthew* 25:29). Get hold of the main thing; all these will be added onto you.

I see a disadvantage in treating this yoga *āsana* practice as therapeutic, because then I'm approaching it with a motive already, with a hope, with an expectation. That is already tension, isn't it? You're not relaxed, you are eagerly fighting, working for it! The problem arose because I was hoping to get something, out of desire, of ambition, and now you are telling me: „Do this, and it will go away!" You're merely introducing another hope, another ambition, another desire.

That is the reason why Swami Sivananda insisted also that while practicing the yoga *āsana*s, one must mentally repeat one's mantra. The repetition of the mantra relaxes, takes the mind away, keeps the mind occupied somewhere. You are merely listening and watching the movement of the body. You are still working your way up into the headstand or whatever it is, and when the balance is lost or you're wobbling, that wobbling itself draws your attention, but when everything is fine, the mind is calmly

repeating the mantra. If the mantra is associated with the breathing, it doesn't need any effort or attention to repeat it.

6 Restoring the Flow: *Āsana*s and *Prāṇāyāma*s

The *āsana*s that we practice during the *haṭha* yoga-classes are not all mentioned in the two basic texts that we follow, the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* and the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*. They have got a few, but others are not mentioned at all, and some *āsana*s are called by different names.

For instance, *viparītakaraṇī* is usually taken to mean the half-shoulderstand: You raise yourself up and hold your bottom. But in some texts, the headstand, *śīrṣāsana*, is known as *viparītakaraṇī*. You wonder why, till you realize that this word *viparītakaraṇī* is an ordinary Sanskrit word with its own meaning. *Karaṇī* is the *doer*, *to do*, *viparīta* is *upside-down*: a *posture that turns you upside-down*.

They believe there is a lunar sphere in the head and that there is a solar plexus in the abdomen. It's not as farfetched as it appears at first sight. The mentally deranged person is called a *lunatic*. So, obviously some others also associated the brain and the brain center with a lunar force. The abdominal heat is referred to by everybody as *solar plexus*, a solar force.

The yogis' observation was – it was not merely a contention, or concept or belief, but observation it was – that the more we stay in the upright position, the more tired and depleted we become. Two or three hours of upright position make you yawn. They figured out that this is because the head is on top, the abdomen is below. They probably invented a nice, lovely, romantic theory, a *yogi fiction*!

They said that the gastric fire is burning all the time, and the fire always burns out. And there is a life-giving lunar force they called the nectar, *amṛta*. It is pouring down from up, falls into this fire and is consumed by it. They very cleverly fixed the nectar at the top of the palate. If you turn it upside down, what happens? It pours into your brain, which is nice. The gastric fire – a fire can only burn with an upward movement – does not extend towards the throat and the brain; it extends towards the legs, so it's alright. Any posture which places the solar plexus above the throat is *viparītakaraṇī*, and so they called even the headstand *viparītakaraṇī*. It's good to understand the commonsense point of view, rather than get worked up about the technique and divergent instructions.

Of the postures mentioned, very few are found in the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*. In the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* some more are mentioned. There is a specific mention in the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* that Śiva taught 84 yoga postures. I may sound a bit unorthodox – when they say *Śiva*, please don't get worked up and say: „Oh my God, this Lord Śiva, one of the members of the trinity!" It may be Sivananda – a person named as Śiva. It's better to de-mythologize and de-idealize all these things and get to know them better. Get to know them as personalities and as the expressions of personal feelings and opinions and experiences.

Of these, four are considered important. Those four are postures used for meditation. Yoga *āsana*s were primarily meant as meditation postures. The other aspect of it, the twisting and turning and so on, seems to have evolved much later. At some time or other, they must have discovered that what you and I call disease, or illness, sickness, is caused by the non-flow of *prāṇa* along certain *nāḍī*s. We'll come to these *nāḍī*s later. It's not all that clear, but for the present, let us identify these *nāḍī*s with the nerves.

The yogis must have observed a simple phenomenon which is common and which you and I have observed also, though we have never gone into it: that a limb becomes inert when it is paralyzed. Some energy which was flowing through the nerves along that limb has been cut off somewhere. It's possible that they also performed some surgical operation, cut some nerves and found that the part that it supplied became dead. That's simple, terribly simple!

Having observed this, they perhaps evolved a general principle out of it and concluded that all illness, all malfunctioning of the physical organism can be directly traced to the cutting off of the flow of *prāṇa*. They evolved yoga postures that would restore this flow. There should be no tension in the body, but at the same time there should be no inertia in any part of the body. These two principles must be put together.

We saw that if you are standing in *trikonāsana*, in the triangle posture, there is tension in one limb, and the other limb is completely forgotten. Tension in one part of the body necessarily means that you are going to forget another vital part of the body. Bucking this tension is not good, it will make it more tense. If you turn your attention to that part of the body which has been forgotten, this tension is immediately released. By this twofold action of the yoga postures, the proper flow of *prāṇa* is restored.

But the primary use of the yoga postures was to be able to sit in that posture for a considerable time, firmly and without discomfort. They had put it the other way, though for once the *Sūtras* have a positive definition: *sthira-sukham āsanam* (2.46), „the posture should be firm and comfortable". It is put the other way because you may think: "I am lying down in bed and this is most comfortable, the best posture!" but then you fall asleep. The posture should be firm and not uncomfortable. In that posture you can sit for a considerable time forgetful of the body, oblivious of the body, so that the body does not demand attention, so that, again, the attention can be directed to something more vital.

Vṛkṣāsana: Stand straight. Take one foot up and put it on your thigh. Hands up. This is called *vṛkṣāsana* or *tāḍāsana*. All the names mean just one thing: the posture of a tree, the tree-posture, *to stand like a tree*. It is said that in ancient times, somebody used to stand in that posture for more than 10,000 years. It's possible to meditate in the headstand, in the shoulderstand, in all these postures. I have seen one wonderful yogi and devotee who said that if you remained in *paścimottānāsana*, the forward-bending, for three hours continuously, you'll enter into *samādhi*. I'm undogmatic here, only suggesting that there are infinite possibilities.

Of the four main meditation postures, two are quite popular. The *padmāsana* is of course the most popular. I'll give you different points of view, so that you may be a bit confused. There are some who say that it's terribly important that both the knees are on the floor, there are some who say the heels must touch the groins on both sides. Bring the legs right over, as far away as possible, into the groins! That's one view, this is another view. If you push the heels into the groins, one of your knees is up. They say, it doesn't matter, put a cushion underneath.

Siddhāsana is considered wonderful, and some think that it is the supreme posture. The text says that „if you are able to sit in *siddhāsana* – what more do you want?" (*Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 3.41) That's final!

You stick one heel on the perineum, put the other heel on top of that, and push the toes between the thigh and the calf muscles, the other one also, pull both feet close up. Your left heel is supposed to be pressing on your pubic region, which means, the body comes forward. The text doesn't say anything about what to do with the hands. Put them on your knees or put them on your lap; anything is alright. And probably you are doing *prāṇāyāma*, probably you are doing *japa* with your *mālā*, there are infinite possibilities. Double up the sensitivity to find what suits one.

For *virāsana,* sit on your left heel, bring the right foot over, and hold the knee. A lovely posture! This is highly recommended by a great yogi called Jñāneśvara. It's possible just for those people who have relatively thin thighs and legs.

Once the practice of the other yoga *āsana*s has re-established the flow of *prāṇa* throughout the body, the meditation postures merely re-establish the smooth and even flow of *prāṇa* throughout the body. Then we start *prāṇāyāma*.

Though I mentioned the flow of *prāṇa* in the body, they do not seem to assert that even the personalized or individualized *prāṇa* is confined to the physical body. It is important to remember that *prāṇa* is not breath, *prāṇa* is not even the energy that flows through the nerves, in the veins, arteries, or even cells of the body. *Prāṇa* includes the magnetic field that surrounds this body.

The *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* insists that one pole of this *prāṇa* is twelve inches from the body: *dvādaśānta* which means means *twelve fingertips from the body*. If you describe a shell for yourself, which is twelve inches approximately from your body, that whole shell or shield is also permeated by this *prāṇa*. What exists in the total sphere is called the *prāṇa*. *Prāṇa* is cosmic. But even the individualized *prāṇa* associated with the me is not limited to the physical body. If we understand this, then it is possible to practice *prāṇāyāma* more freely, without getting all that worked up.

The scriptures do not always use the word *prāṇāyāma* for the exercises that we may try to do now. They use the word *kumbhaka*. It's good also to understand the meaning of the three words used in connection with these *prāṇāyāma* exercises. They are: *pūraka*, which is loosely translated as *inhalation*, but literally means *filling*. This filling process commences twelve inches away from me. From there, it flows in. It's not merely physical or breathing work, but mental visualization is also involved in this. The next is *kumbhaka*. *Kumbha* means *pot,* and *kumbhaka* means: You treat your body as a pot, which you are filling until it is completely full. Then cover it, hold the breath as the pot holds grains. *Recaka* has got a rather funny meaning. *Recaka* is not *exhalation*, it is *vomiting*. Holding the pot empty, that's what it means.

All these, what you are used to call *prāṇāyāma,* are all called *kumbhaka*s. The scripture again and again mentions that the breath must be held as long as possible. This, unfortunately, has not been given great prominence, because people are afraid of passing out. Swami Sivananda slightly modified it and said, *as long as comfortable*. But again, this *as long* is there. Modify all that comfortably and I don't have to come to your yoga class! As long as comfortable, because only then it is possible for me to know what *prāṇa* is. It's our comfortable living that has really submerged this *prāṇa*. If even in the yoga class I want comfort, that's defeating the purpose.

There are eight *kumbhaka*s mentioned. One is called *sahita*. *Sahita* is with inhalation and exhalation, and there is another, called *sūrya-bheda*. *Sūrya-bhedana* is very interesting. The text says: „Inhale through the right nostril, fill your breath up and then hold the breath." For how long? „Till perspiration pours from your whole body." *Sūrya* is the *solar force*, *bhedana* is *to pierce* it, so that you break open the shell of solar force, and you're blazing fire then: *sūrya-bhedana*. Somewhere else it is mentioned that *sūrya-bhedana kumbhaka* must be done till not perspiration, but blood pours out of your skin.

Ujjāyī is another *kumbhaka*. *Śītalī* is another *kumbhaka, bhastrikā,* and *bhrāmarī*. We'll come to that when we'll start practicing one by one. Then comes *mūrcchā*. Literally, it means *fainting*: you inhale and hold your breath till you pass out. Then you know what *prāṇa* is! If you can reach that stage without passing out, you have seen *prāṇa*. What makes you pass out? The action of *prāṇa*.

Both here and in meditation, you hold your breath and watch, and see: „What is that power in me?" If I do not panic, if I'm bold enough, if I'm courageous enough to say: „Alright, I'm prepared to pass out", what is it in me that says: „Come on, out! Stop it!"? Why is it that I can't prolong this retention a few seconds more?

So, it's neither here nor there, neither am I seeking comfort nor am I going to commit suicide. Just then something beyond the me steps in and takes the hand away from the nose, and I breathe in. What was it that did it? Don't call it *reflex action*, don't call it this, don't call it that. What exactly is it?

The same question comes back to us in meditation. In the waking state I am aware of all this and in the sleep-state I am not aware of anything, but what is the state in between, when I'm not awake to this world, nor am I unaware of it? What is the threshold? How do I slip from here to there? If I can get there for one split-second, that's meditation, *samādhi*! In the same way, if I can get hold of that thing which, while the breath is held, says: „Enough!" – who is it that shouts from inside? That is *prāṇa*! Once you have seen that, you're unafraid, completely unafraid: *mūrcchā*.

The last of these eight is called *kevalī*. That is a beautiful discovery of these yogis. It is the opposite of that which was first called the *sahita*. *Sahita* means *kumbhaka* with inhalation and exhalation. *Kevala kumbhaka* is without it, *kumbhaka* alone. That is the complete suspension of breath without inhalation, exhalation.

Is such a thing possible? Yes, all of us have experienced it: in a state of what is called *shock*, there has been suspension of breath for a couple of seconds, a few seconds, depending on how deep the shock is. The jaw drops open, the eyes look glassy and staring, there is – suspension of breath. We have all experienced it. But unfortunately, as in the case of sleep, we are in it, and the moment I begin to observe it, I've come back, I'm out of it.

This is our problem: either we are in darkness, or we are in light, but never able to observe what is darkness seen from within it. We have never stood on the threshold, either on this side or on that side. Our life is governed by this *either-or* pendulum. The spiritual life, or the life of the Buddha, is *neither-nor*. If I'm neither here nor there, I'm at the threshold. And that is called *transcendence*.

So, there is wide range of *prāṇāyāma*-practices. One or the other cannot be taught. The alternate nostril breathing is one that can be taught to anybody.

For alternate-nostril breathing with *sahita kumbhaka*, let the breath flow, becoming intensely aware of it while keeping your eyes open all the time. Can you experience the sensation of filling and the *kumbhaka*?

After a complete inhalation, hold the nostrils at the tip, and hold the breath at the tip. See if you can get the sensation. The breath is held only at the tip of the nostrils, pushing the fingers out. Without the use of the hands take a deep breath.

In the same way, try to block the breath at the pit of the throat, in the chest. Then hold the breath again somewhere in the middle of the chest. Inhale, and while you hold it, keep your mouth open. The idea is to have the sensation of the breath held in the middle of the chest. From there up, it's all open, air can circle in it very freely. So, it's possible to hold mentally hold the breath, the energy called *prāṇa* anywhere you like.

Sit comfortably and go on breathing in and out, changing the pattern without taking the hands away. If the right arm gets fatigued, use the left one.

Inhale through the left nostril, fill up, exhale through the right, and as you exhale, pull the abdomen in as far back as it would go. Inhale through the right, stick abdomen out, fill up. Exhale through the left, pull the abdomen in as far back it would go.

Inhale through the left, exhale through the right, pull the abdomen in, squeeze there every little bit of air out and feel that you're holding your breath there. Inhale through the right, exhale through the left, pull the abdomen in.

Inhale through the left, fill up. Hold, concentrate on the solar plexus. Exhale through the right, pull the abdomen in as far back as possible. Inhale. Hold. Exhale, pull the abdomen in as far back as possible and hold the lungs empty. And drop the abdomen, but hold the lungs empty, and inhale when you want to.

There is nothing like that, in the entire world! Try it. In a few seconds you will see all kind of fireworks.

An important point: in the alternate-nostril breathing, try not to take the fingertips away from the wings of the nostrils. Keep them there. That is by far the best indicator of your own limits. If the wings of the nostrils are agitated, they begin to throb, and that means you're exceeding your limits. If they are placid, then that means you're alright. Hold your breath a little longer, then you'll find the nostril has become a butterfly. So, keep the fingertips on the nostrils.

Often, I'm asked: is there any danger in this thing? No, there is absolutely no danger. You cannot harm yourself – try! Be like a child and watch what happens.

Obviously, your breath is connected with the cosmos, with the cosmic energy. If you watch very carefully: you never breathe through both nostrils with equal intensity all the time. If you hold a piece of cotton in

front of your nose, you will find that one nostril is more open than the other, even when you're not suffering from a cold or things like that. They have even calculated that it changes every hour and a half. It starts flowing on one side, and then the other side, then the other side, then this.

The left nostril is supposed to be lunar and the right nostril solar. They have some techniques to change the flow of the *nāḍī*s. I don't know if you have seen what is called a *yoga-daṇḍa* that is used by yogis to change the flow. If your left nostril is flowing too heavily and you want to change it, you put that stick under your left armpit and lean on it, so that the right nostril is on top, the left is below. Gradually, this changes.

You can do that even while sleeping. If you find that the breath is flowing more freely through the left nostril, you turn to your left and lie on it a little while, it will change to the right. The armpits also seem to have some relationship to it, so that if there is some pressure on the armpit, it changes more quickly. The yogis' idea is that if the breath flows equally through both nostrils, the mind is quieter, therefore it facilitates meditation.

But it's inevitable: we are body-bound, and I think anything that we lay our hands on will get physicalized. In this *haṭha* yoga, in this *prāṇāyāma*, trying to heal and trying to get rid of paralysis and so on and so forth. All this is going to confirm the fact that I am a terribly important person. Instead of doing that, can I watch the *prāṇa* and do the *prāṇāyāma* to become more aware of where this I-thought arises? How do I breathe? And when I hold the breath, who kicks me up and makes me breathe again? Why am I afraid that I might fall into a coma? Why am I afraid that I might die?

The I-consciousness is directed outward, and so it sees the body as something which belongs to me. When that is turned within, the body is still the body! You will still eat and drink and sleep and have your family and have everything go on. But instead of the light being turned externally, it's turned inwardly. Why must I avoid pain? Why must I seek pleasure? Without giving any of this more value than it has, can I be constantly – constantly! – watching to see what this mystery I is?

„Oh, I don't want to suffer." Without making it intellectual, without making it logical, because then again, the I gets you there, in logic, in intellectualism, in rationalization, merely you're looking at it. Okay, you don't want to suffer? Well, there is a state in which you don't suffer: sleep. Where are you when the I is asleep? What is it that is awake now that was not awake in sleep? Then you realize that pain cannot be avoided by running away from it, but by owning it. In sleep, I didn't run away from pain, the pain was there – probably.

While being awake, while sleeping, while dreaming, there's the constant awareness of what goes on. It is then that the light shines on it and I see, it's only a piece of wire and there's no snake there. The wire is still there, so that the body is there, no one is going to deny that, life-force is there, no one is going to deny that, and consciousness is there, no one is going to deny that, except the idea of a snake, the idea of the I. That's quite simple! Terribly simple.

7 *Prāṇāyāma* and *Bandha*: More Practices

We'll continue with this *prāṇāyāma*, go over to the practice of some *kumbhaka*s and some *mudrā*s. There are a few more *kumbhaka*s, some which are very important, some which may not be that important – we shall see.

Bhastrikā may look like *kapālabhāti*, and more than any distinctions in the descriptions that we may get from texts I think the most important thing is to remember the words and the word meaning. *Kapālabhāti* is *shining the skull. Kapāla* is *skull* and *bhāti* means *shining*, so like *shoeshine* it is *skull-shine*. While you are doing it, you must really get the feeling that the brain is being cleared. *Bhastrikā* literally means *bellows*.

Again, *kumbhaka* is an important thing in *bhastrikā* also. There are, as usual, at least two different techniques. One, that one uses only one nostril to begin with, the other, that you can use both nostrils till you come to the final retention. Swami Sivananda taught us to use both nostrils.

Using both nostrils and using the abdomen as the blacksmith's bellows, you pump vigorously, as vigorously as possible. By this diaphragmatic action, all the impure air is literally pushed out of the lungs. When you feel a little light in the head, sort of dizzy, then you've had enough. If you don't feel anything at all, it means that you're not using the bellows-system properly. Don't say: „I don't feel dizzy because I'm so strong!" Maybe someone feels dizzy after ten exposures, some after 50 or 100, but you must pass out.

Just before that, stop doing the bellows-movement, and then take a full breath. Don`t fill the lungs completely, knowing that once the breath is held, the oxygen is exchanged for carbon dioxide, there will likely be some expansion of the gases in the lungs, so provide some room for that. Then you will be able to hold your breath much longer.

If you remember the trick of concentrating on the solar plexus and to give yourself the feeling that the breath is held there, and not at the throat or the nostrils, you'll feel quite comfortable. Otherwise, some pressure in your throat may be felt, and discomfort may be experienced. Gently drop the chin, and once the chin is on the chest, press it down, fix it there. All these things have got their proper names – we'll come to that later.

Hold the breath as long as you like. When you find that you are choked and you would like to breathe, stretch yourself up and see if you can hold the breath for some more. Stick the abdomen out, in a psychological attempt to create more space for the air to circulate, before finally you yield to the pressure.

The inhalation can be as you like, but the exhalation is very short and with force. The shoulders may move, but only as a kind of reflex to the abdominal bellows-movement. Hold the breath for long enough. You will find that the first impulse is to take a little breath before exhaling, because the oxygen has been completely used up, so we need a little more before the next try, merely using the abdominal muscles as bellows and there is no other conscious movement.

It's better not to hedge yourself in here with too many rules and regulations. If you can understand the word *bhastrikā* and put all your attention on the *bhastrikā*-movement of the abdomen the rest will take care of itself.

Śītalī is quite simple: Stick your tongue out and roll it into a tube. Then stand in front of a mirror and see yourself doing it. I'm not joking. If you could see your face in the mirror, you could do it by tomorrow morning, I'm sure about it!

Roll your tongue, breathe in through this tongue, hold. Breathing through the tongue, you're aware of any blockage. It's very easy to stop the breath at the solar plexus, whereas if you breathe through your nose, you tend to get pressure in your neck. Breathe out through the nostrils. *Śītalī* is cooling.

Ujjāyī is an extremely simple and beautiful *prāṇāyāma*, merely closing the glottis a little bit. It may make a sound, though the voice-box is not used at all. It's merely the glottis. See if you can do it. If there's any problem, I'll suggest breathing *ha*, as if you were going to sleep. You can also breathe in and out as if yawning. The same thing, when it is done with closed mouth, is what we are looking for. This is, as every *prāṇāyāma,* wonderful to start meditation with. There is a sound, and the sound invites the attention to follow, and that's it. It is also one of the most effective ways of dozing off, going off to sleep. The word *ujjāyī* means *lifting up.*

Next, we'll try this *bhrāmarī*. That's also another highly interesting *prāṇāyāma*. *Bhrāmarī* means *bee*. And the technique again is terribly simple. You think that a bee has stuck in your throat. That's all. You take a deep breath, and then the bee has stuck in the throat, and so the bee is making noise, as you exhale.

They have what is known as male bee sound, and a female bee sound, and for no obvious reason the sound produced similarly during inhalation is considered the male sound. That's very difficult and it's very coarse. The exhalation, which is a nice, sweet sound, is supposed to be the female sound. But Swami Sivananda dropped this male altogether, so he called it merely *bee*.

To meditate, before the *ujjāyī*, first do this, and when the mind is gradually getting introverted, then go into this *ujjāyī*. These two together facilitate concentration.

In all these *prāṇāyāma* exercises which we have described so far, the essential part according to the *haṭha* yogi is the *kumbhaka*, holding the breath, regardless of how you get the breath in. It is in *kumbhaka* that one comes face to face with the *prāṇa* and understands, knows the meaning of *prāṇa*. Also, when you do the *kumbhaka*, you see that the mental activity is restricted. Thus, the mind does not jump around as it used to before. When the *prāṇa* doesn't move violently, the mind doesn't move violently.

There are said to be ten *bandha*s and *mudrā*s. Some texts do not make a distinction between *mudrā* and *bandha*, the meaning is more or less the same. *Mudrā* means *a seal* and *bandha* means *restricting*, *tying up*. The most important are the *bandha*s.. The three *bandha*s which are often practiced are directly

related to *prāṇāyāma*. It's supposed to be done in *siddhāsana*, if you can. If you cannot do it, don't worry: sit as you will.

The first *bandha*, if you like to give yourself the feeling, is merely closing the rectum and pulling the whole alimentary canal up. At least in the beginning stages, you will find a pressure in the pit of your throat. The pit of the throat is deepening, that is: the whole alimentary canal is being pulled up. Shifting your waist in doesn't help; it's purely internal – and that's called *mūlabandha*. *Mūla* means the *root*, the *base*, and *bandha* is *binding it*. You're binding the base.

The second is the chin-lock, which is known as the *jālandharabandha*. *Jāla* means a *net*, *wire-mesh*. This *bandha* is said to tie up all the *nāḍī*s, all the nerves in the body. Therefore, it is called *jālandharabandha*.

The third is *uḍḍīyānabandha*. That is sucking the abdomen in. The impulse or the movement starts from the pubic region, down below. It's scooping up! Your shoulders do not become tense at all. *Uḍḍīyāna* means *to fly up*: the abdomen flies up inside.

First inhale. When the inhalation is complete, drop the chin down on the chest, hold it tight: *jālandharabandha*. While exhaling, pull the abdomen up. The abdomen is going to fly into the throat: *uḍḍīyānabandha*. Towards the end of the exhalation and the following inhalation, you practice the *mūlabandha*.

If you do this just for a couple of times, you will realize that here again we have this same *prāṇāyāma*-trick of holding the lungs empty. Holding the lungs empty is the peak, when all *bandha*s are practiced together. If you are real yoga students, try it!

8 The *Cakra*s: In Tune with the Entire Universe

The spiral movement we were discussing is when there is movement of energy in consciousness and a particle of energy as it were goes out into orbit. If it returns to its source at once, the circle is completed. That is probably what you call *God* or *divine* or *incarnations*, but in the case of most others, the particle misses the source just a little and so goes on spiraling. As it goes on spiraling, there is a constant pull towards the center because that's from where the whole thing started.

So, while the movement away from the center goes on, there is still a continuous pull to the center. You can see that in the lake. It's beautiful: water evaporates from the lake and goes up, but that water has got to come back to its source. The vapor may go up and rain on the lake immediately. And it's finished. That's like the particle leaving the source and returning to it in one quick circle: the water going up and falling down immediately. No problem there.

But the other one is lifted up, wafted, pushed around, and it falls on top of mountains as rain or snow. Then it is preserved there. Then sun shines on it. It's cold first, then it warms up. As it warms up, it starts dripping and becomes a small stream that is pushed around, dashed around, kicked around. It rolls down, rolls down and rolls down, eventually it has to come back to the source.

This, I think, is one of the most vital and important messages of yoga: that there is no eternal damnation. You've got to get back to the source! It's possible that somebody drinks it – it still does come out somewhere. This much is certain: water that leaves its source must return to its source – now or a hundred years or a hundred lives later, it doesn't matter. Because having left the source, there is still a constant pull.

The pull towards the center does not happen in a straight line, the gravitation is also spiral-like. That is what you see as the *iḍā* and the *piṅgala*, the two *nāḍī*s that crisscross the spine from top to bottom. The central channel is called the *suṣumnā*, and the *prāṇa* flows through the *suṣumnā* when there is direct return to the source, or when you have discovered the direct path to the center. When the *prāṇa* flows in the *suṣumnā*, there is practically no movement, it's a unilateral, unidirectional movement.

Unidirectional movement is no movement. Energy has to move, and as long as it moves without disturbance, without diversion, without distraction, there is no movement. It's merely performing its natural function. Movement in energy is multidirectional movement or distracted movement: the river flowing just in one direction doesn't even look like flowing. It is only when it goes here and goes there in a sort of distraction that there is movement and therefore wastage.

The unidirectional non-movement of energy is along the *suṣumnā*, the central channel. When the spiraling continues, and when there is at the same time a pull towards the center, that return also is a spiral movement, and that is the *iḍā* and the *piṅgala*. *Iḍā* is considered the lunar and *piṅgala* the solar force. As a matter of fact, the word *haṭha* also means the same: *ha* stands for the sun, *ṭha* for the moon. The coming together of the two is *haṭha yoga*. The division between these two disappears, and when

the division disappears, there is unidirectional movement, when the *prāṇa* moves neither here nor there, but through the center.

In pure consciousness, there is no space. Space is brought into being by movement. That is: in deep sleep, there is no space at all. When there is total quiescence or oneness, there is no space. It is the first movement of energy in consciousness that *is* space. So, the yogis said: the first spiraling happens this way, and the first element, fact, principle, *cakra*, coming into being then, is space, the throat. A movement of energy in consciousness is space, and a movement in space is air – this, I think, is quite simple, isn't it? There's no mystery at all about it, but unfortunately this is considered metaphysics, or all sorts of crazy things that create worry. It's simple: space is a concept, and the concept involves sheer, pure movement of energy in consciousness.

The first movement in space is air, and so you have the second *cakra*: air. The spiral widens and creates the air. The spiral keeps widening, and as it widens, the various gases begin to collide, as it were, and this collision creates friction and fire. So, the next *cakra* is fire. This again is common knowledge: when you mix hydrogen and oxygen, there's an explosion and there is a drop of water. So, side by side with fire is created water, and that's the next. When water precipitates, it becomes ice, solid and that solid mass is the earth.

As the spiral continues to gyrate, all these so-called elements are brought into being. Are they completely separated? When we say that the body is made of earth, water, fire and air, do we imply that the water is all accumulated in the abdomen, and fire is all accumulated somewhere else, or air is here, and so on? No. That you can only understand when you tune a transistor radio: Vancouver … Spokane … Toronto … There is only one antenna that picks up all the stations at that tip, which means that every wave that is sent to it is laden with what is broadcast in all these places, the difference being purely in tuning. Therefore, the distinction between the earth element and the water element is not one of spatial difference, but it's a different dimension; the thing is exactly the same.

What is earth? It's a concept, not this matter! Matter has got some moisture in it, has got fire in it, this has got air in it, gases in it. So, it is not the earth we are talking about there; this earth is a vibration, is a movement of energy, is a modification of energy, is a certain form of energy, which is experienceable on a certain dimension. The same energy, looked at from one point of view is earth and becomes water, looked at from another dimension, fire from another dimension, and so on.

The thing is the same. When you filter one, you don't see the others. And that again is terribly important to remember, because whereas we are asked to contemplate these centers, they are not as though fixed ganglia, or physical factors, but these psychic centers within the body are spiritual. There is a lot of symbolism connected with it. Each one of these psychic centers represents not only one of the elements. They can be interpreted cosmologically, metaphysically, and psychologically, too.

What is known as these *nāḍī*s in the body are like radio waves pouring in. You don't see them, and you don't see the radio waves either. *Nāḍī* is often translated as *nerves*, somewhere as blood vessels, too, but the root meaning of the word is *nad*, that is, *motion*; energy in motion is *nāḍī.* We are told that there

are 72,000 *nāḍī*s in the human body, in an infant's body as well as in a giant's body. There is another scripture that says there are 350,000. What is the difference? Nothing. You see, this is a very simplistic way. Can you count the hairs on this girl's head? I can: 360,226! If you doubt – count! Someone gave the number 72,000, and someone else gave the number 350,000. No one really knows their number.

They say that all these *nāḍī*s come together at certain points in the human body. One of the major junctions is the heart, another is the bottom where you're seated, and they also say that in the heart, there are 101 major *nāḍī*s.

All these *nāḍī*s pour the energy movement within what we call *the human body*. We call it the human *body* because in this spiral movement, we have reached a certain point where the body seems to be solid substance. There appears to be solidity. Why am I hesitant? Because even your science says that the body is not so solid. All the things that are considered beautiful in a body are completely ignored by x-ray! So, it's obvious that it's only an idea that there is flesh. The movement of energy in consciousness has spiraled and created an apparent physicality. This apparent physical body is permeated by these *nāḍī*s pouring energy.

The *cakra*s are supposed to be located in the central channel. They are not necessarily associated with certain organs, though they have again been identified with some organs. When you bump into differences and discrepancies in these descriptions, don't get confused, only realize that we are talking about something which is beyond description. It's only the description that varies – words! I must try to reach out beyond this expression and see what the truth is. I don't have the thought that it's confusing, and probably it's all fantasy.

It's something which your senses cannot grasp. Since you're grasping it with the senses, it eludes you. For instance, of these six centers, some say the second one is somewhere near the sexual organs, and some others say that it is the spleen. What is the difference? It's somewhere in that region; forget about it. The third one is called *manipura*, and in some very respectable texts, the second one is called *manipura*. Must I lose all faith in it, just because he calls it something, and he calls it something else? No. I'll still investigate it, treading very softly, knowing that this is a field in which neither the mind nor the senses have access. Thus, there is no need to be confused at all.

Each one of these centers is regarded as the point on the radio-receiving dial which puts the whole receiving-set in tune with a certain broadcasting station. If you think of the *cakra* in the body spiral again, it envelops the whole cosmos. It puts you in contact with the cosmos instantly and immediately. It is not something which is confined to the body, but in the macrocosmic arc it puts you in touch with the entire cosmos.

Every one of those centers immediately takes you beyond the me. It is not in me; it is the macrocosmic arc and at one point it touches the microcosmic arc. Then all this famous: „My *kuṇḍalinī* has awoken" is nonsense. What is *my kuṇḍalinī*? It's a cosmic power which functions on seven cosmic planes. You happen to be on one of these small specks of dust, floating in space. Since that speck of dust happens to

be part of this cosmic being, this *kuṇḍalinī* is relevant to you also. If that is understood, I think even the greatest yogi will be fairly humble. There's nothing to boast about, nothing to be afraid of.

Let's start with the first and see how they are all pure and simple and full of common sense. The first one is considered to be the center which represents earth. Obviously, you're sitting on it! You're sitting on the earth and you're sitting on the earth center. So, the point of the body which comes directly into contact with earth is called *the earth center*. Perhaps the four petals or radii of the lotus flower standing for this *cakra* represent the four directions – you can meditate upon it beautifully, comfortably and simply.

Every one of these *cakra*s also has a geometric pattern to represent that particular element. A yellow square represents the earth element. Then there is a mystic syllable called *bīja-mantra* associated with it. That for the earth is *laṁ*. Every one of these centers is also associated with an animal. The *mūlādhāra*, the base *cakra*, is associated with an elephant. Obvious: strong and sturdy and firm, and unmoving; you sit there and feel that you`re unmoving, like an elephant.

Each one is also represented by a God and a Goddess, so that you can meditate upon them. The famous *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa*, *The Serpent Power* of Arthur Avalon gives different deities for each *cakra* than some other tantric texts which give other deities. All these differences denote the same truth. The truth has to be discovered by you.

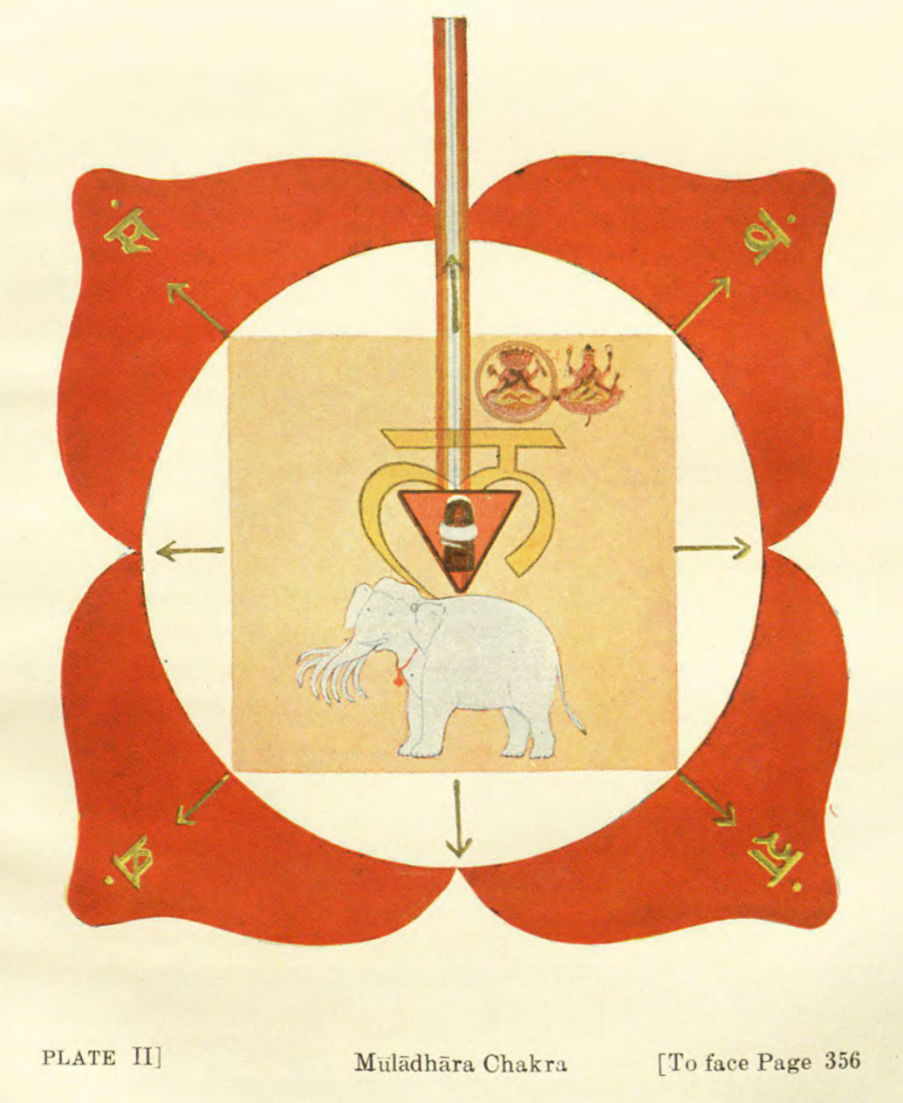


Figure 4: Symbolic depiction of mūlādhāra cakra by Arthur Avalon {to be added]

There are mystic sounds, associated with each one of these radii or petals, so that one who wants to enter deep into this can spend at least one day meditating upon each of these *cakra*s. Because visualization is considered important, you are given a wealth of material: the color of the petals, the color of the pericarp, the color inside the pericarp and the color of the letter, the *laṁ* that stands on it, the color of the square, the geometrical design – so many things, so that your own visualization becomes more and more acute.

What do you associate earth with? Solidity, firmness, grossness, coarseness. Contemplation of this earth *cakra* can bring about all these in your mind. It can enable you, your mind, to come in touch with grossness, firmness, so that it's not only something bad. There are some good and some not so good psychological qualities associated with each *cakra*.

In the same way with water: water is life-giving, adapting, but also backboneless. It takes the line of less resistance: you don't want to stand up to anything. Contemplating these psychological factors, meditating upon them with great intensity may enable you to contact these qualities. You may want to promote them, you may want to develop them, you may want to cultivate them, or you may want to eliminate them, but you become aware of them – that's it. Whether they are noble qualities or not so noble qualities – you become aware of them.

The second *cakra* is *svādhiṣṭhāna* with six petals, a crescent moon as a symbol, and *makara,* an alligator, as animal associated with it. *Makara* somehow – I really don't know why – is associated with virility, vitality. The element represented is water, and therefore the mantra is *vaṁ*, water. Quite simple: *vaṁ* – *water*.

The petals are crimson. The crescent moon is white. It's obvious that this area, the genital area, is full of water, and the mantra *vaṁ* is also associated with the nectar of immortality. This again is I think pure and simple common sense: it is the reproductive process which keeps the thing going, immortal, next to immortal.

Figure 5: Symbolic depiction of svādhiṣṭhāna cakra *by Arthur Avalon {to be added]*

Above it, in the solar plexus area, you have the *manipura cakra* with ten petals, ten radii and a red triangle. It is red for fire; it's a red triangle, and so the mantra is *raṁ*, *red*. The animal is ram also. I don't know why this ram is associated with the fire element; probably it is fighting. Again, the connection with the solar plexus is obvious, as with a person of a fiery nature, fiery determination, fiery speaking powers. All these psychological qualities are also associated with this center.

Figure 6: Symbolic depiction of manipura cakra *by Arthur Avalon {to be added]*

Higher, above that, in the heart-lung region, is the *anāhata*, which represents the air, and so the mantra is *yaṁ*. There is a smoky hexagon here. The smoky hexagon may also symbolize the coming together, the meeting point of the divine and the human. The divine comes half-way as it were, to meet the human; human aspiration is met by divine grace. A deer or antelope is the animal associated with it, which is very fast, fast-moving. The connection of air with lungs and the heart is obvious.

Figure 7: Symbolic depiction of nāhata cakra *by Arthur Avalon {to be added]*

Finally, there is the *viśuddha*, with the mantra *haṁ*, in the throat region. It`s element is space. It is surrounded by darkness; the center is pure white: it's a full moon shining in in total darkness. There again is an elephant as a symbol animal: you cannot move space. Space is firmly rooted, established, immobile.

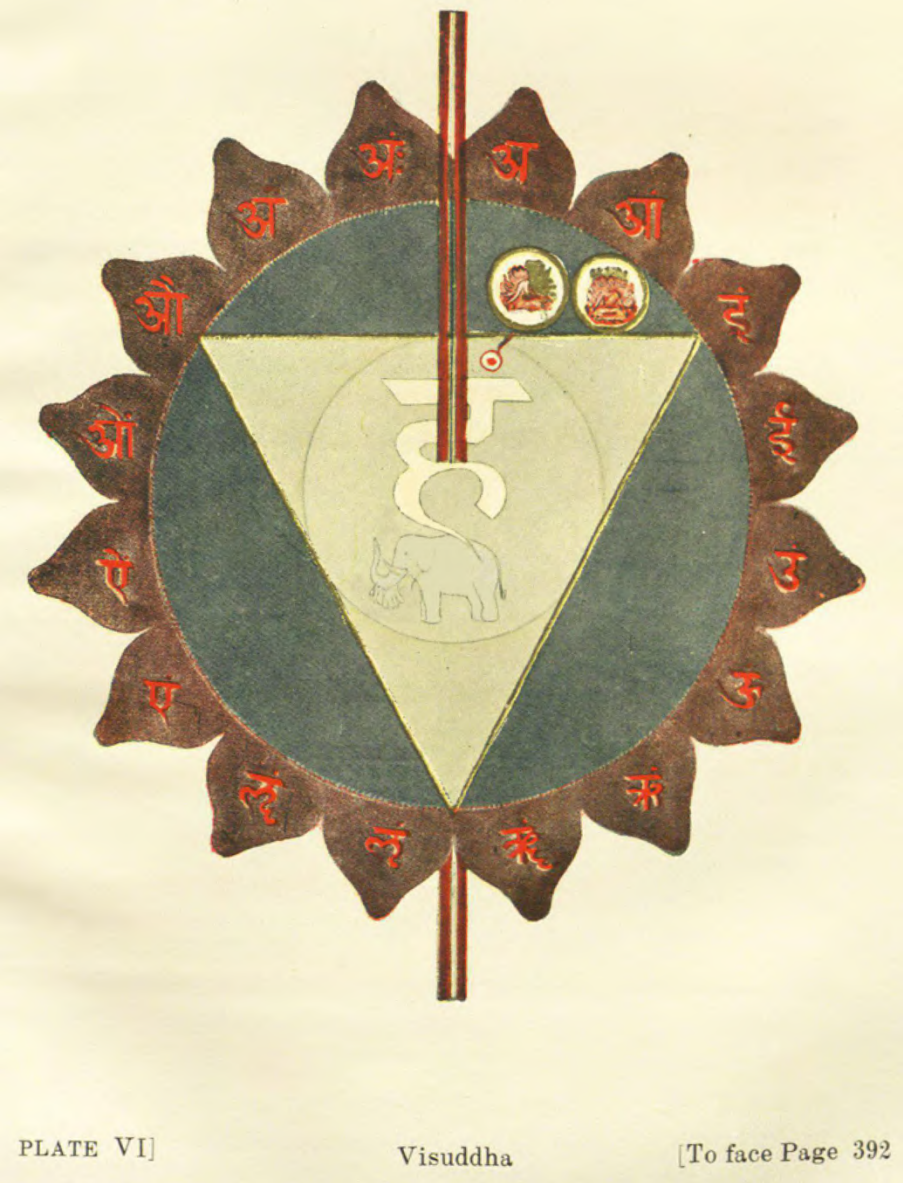


Figure 8: Symbolic depiction of viśuddha cakra *by Arthur Avalon {to be added]*

The last, so far as the *cakra*s go, is the *ājñā* between the eyebrows. The color is not important there, nothing is important there. The color cannot be painted at all, because the text says it is like lightning, except that it seems to have two radii, the color is of pure lightning. The mantra there is *Oṁ*.

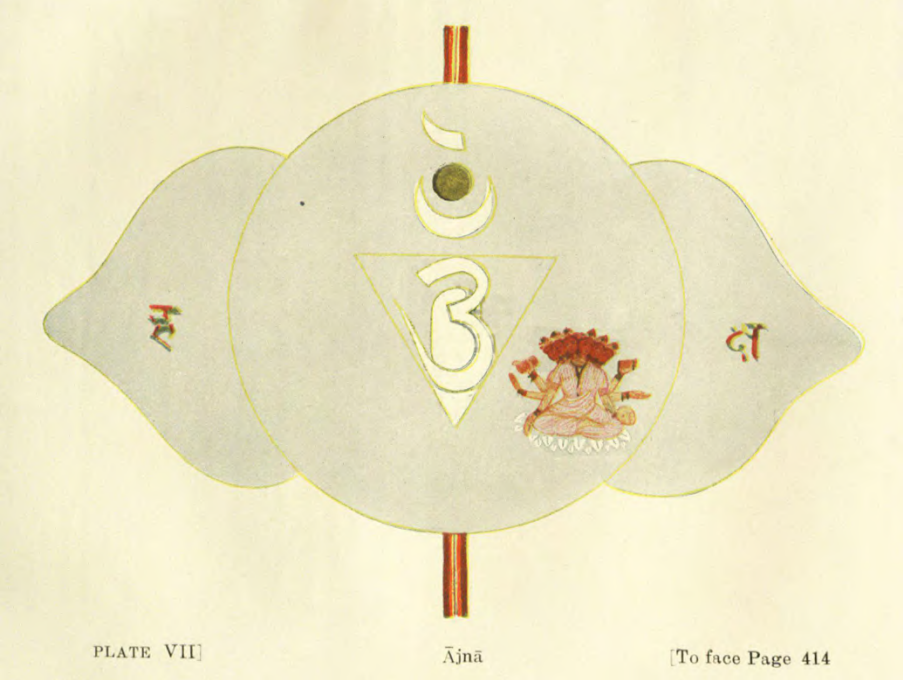


Figure 9: : Symbolic depiction of ājñā cakra *by Arthur Avalon {to be added]*

Beyond that it is not possible for the human individual to ascend, that is: perhaps even not aspire. When one reaches this spot, when the energy has been withdrawn to that spot, then it is offered up to the lord to be taken over.

I've got a feeling that all this is pure and simple common-sense. If I realize that it is on account of a faulty movement that I got away from the center, it should be possible to cancel out the erratic movement of *prāṇa* in those other channels, *iḍā* and *piṅgala*, and when that erratic movement is restrained, the *prāṇa* moves through the central channel back to the center. And that is the meaning of *haṭha* yoga. When this happens, *haṭha* yoga has happened. If this does not happen, *haṭha* yoga is physiological. There's no other logic!

Here one need not become confused by this wealth of details. You can take one and go on for about two months till the picture becomes absolutely clear. Take one bit, for instance the yellow square, and keep meditating upon the yellow square for some time. Then add one more bit to it, then add one more bit to it, till it becomes clear. On the one hand, one can go on talking about the *cakra*s for the next 200 years. On the other, one has to experience this.

I'm particularly interested in the psychological aspects of the *cakra* meditation. When I focus the attention on the solar plexus, there is already a built-in conditioning, if you wish to call it so, that that is the seat of fire. I contemplate the fire element, in my mind this mantra *Oṁ raṁ* keeps humming, and that contemplation brings the several psychological aspects of it: one, that there is the fire of zeal, which I may want to further, augment; two, the fire of impulsiveness which I may want to restrain. I may want the warmth of the fire, the positive warmth in my relationships; I may want to reduce the destructiveness of the fire, and in the same way I could work on the heart *cakra*, *anāhata*.

It's possible for me to see that I'm unstable, flippant, in my attitude to life, in my relationships – once here, once there, instead of one thing all over. That is also associated with air: the constant blowing hither and thither. And there is also the life-giving nature of the air. Air has the ability to purify everything, blow all the dust and dirt away, the ashes away, leaving the pure fire underneath. All these are associated with the heart *cakra*. By contemplating that, I can enter the spirit of it, perhaps, and also by contemplating on the interlaced triangles.

I may discover this wonderful truth that mine is to aspire, is to look up, is to yearn, not to demand. It is not as if I yearn for the grace, and then the grace must descend. It will descend! I've no power to demand, I've no power to compel, I must wait for grace to descend. If one goes into this without getting hooked up to some kind of ideology, it's possible for me to discover endless truths, merely contemplating the *cakra*s. But one has to do it oneself.

Part of the *maṇḍala* pattern rests on some kind of Hindu orientation, though it can also be seen in a more neutral perspective. The *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* itself takes it out of the purely Hinduist theology into a tantric theology that is common to both Tibetans and Hindus. It's a thing of its own, but because some sort of anthropomorphic representations are seen, one tends to view it as Oriental and Hindu. Once again one must explore all that.

View them as not entirely physiological, not entirely psychological, but as a composite of the total truth, which to begin with acts as a window. A window is a condition, definitely a limitation. But through that window I may be able to look at the sky – not the entire sky, but once I have learned to recognize what the sky looks like, it's possible for me to get out of the window and be one with the sky. The *cakra maṇḍala*s are windows on the cosmos.

If once again we recall this spiral: the spiral touches me at one point, and the entire universe at one point. By contacting that particular principle here, I am somehow in tune with the entire universe. That has to be brought about.

The wealth of symbolism that is brought into this is perhaps meant deliberately to load the brain with so much work, it's bound to stay there. I may start with the geometrical symbol. But then, if I go on merely to visualize the geometrical symbol, the mind says: „I can still manage to think of something else in the meantime!" So I bring some deity into it. I'm supposed to offer all sorts of worship to that deity. The deity is provided with a vehicle that I contemplate. All of this is seated in a syllable, the mantra *laṁ*, *vaṁ*, *raṁ, yaṁ, haṁ* and so on. I contemplate that. Then come the petals, the color of those petals, the color of the letters on the petals: it's a whole, it's a whole big ceremony. On top of all this, one enters in what is called *laya*, that is the spiral in its return movement: what went down the spiral is made to return.

That was again described very beautifully in one of the scriptures, where we start with the meditation in the *mūlādhāra*. There are mantras on the petals: *vaṁ*, *śaṁ*, *ṣaṁ*, *saṁ*. We go on contemplating the sound symbols, and they are withdrawn into the *bīja*, *laṁ*.

Once that is done, the attention is shifted to the next one. The yogi contemplates: the entire earth has been dissolved into water. The entire earth element, not this silly earth! One can take a lump of earth,

put it in water and see it dissolve. In the same way I am visualizing the earth element being absorbed in water. In the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* we find that each succeeding element is considered to be twice the size of the previous one. Which is again very interesting: in the whole cosmos, what is called the earth or the solid part of it, is nothing compared to the water. Even if you dig into this earth, it's true. There's a lot more water on earth than of this solid thing. So, it's possible for all this earth to be completely dissolved into this water. We are swimming already all the time!

Earth is dissolved in water. The water element has got six petals: *bhaṁ*, *haṁ*, *maṁ*, *yaṁ*, *raṁ*, *laṁ*, and I must contemplate these *bhaṁ haṁ maṁ yaṁ raṁ laṁ* so intensely, that merely I am water, for the present. It's probably self-hypnosis; you can call it what you like. I become water for the present; for the time being, there is no earth in it, I'm pure water. As I go on doing this, I see the whole thing merging in the water's own mantra, *vaṁ*, so the radii have returned to the center in that *cakra*.

Then, gradually, it is made to ascend. When it comes onto the next one, the *manipura*, it spreads out again: *ḍaṁ*, *ḍhaṁ*, *ṇaṁ*, *taṁ*, *thaṁ*, *daṁ*, *dhaṁ*, *naṁ*, *paṁ*, *phaṁ*. I go on contemplating these ten and go on with all this ceremony. I worship that God in that *cakra*, which means that at every stage I am reminded that this is not my will that does it.

At every stage, it is the divine that does it, not me; the divine, something other than me. I don't know, I don't know who it is; so that the ego-sense is kept in check all the time. We are never allowed to forget that it is not me: Yoga is not practiced by me. The me practicing yoga is something demonical, diabolical. I offer worship to that deity there and pray for help and guidance, grace. That revolves and revolves, till I become fire. Even the body might be hot at that stage. The fire merges into the *bīja*, *Oṁ raṁ*, and the consciousness is completely and totally withdrawn into that *Oṁ raṁ*.

Then the fire ascends to the next stage, spreads out again, into the twelve petals *kaṁ, khaṁ, gaṁ, ghaṁ, ngaṁ, chaṁ, chhaṁ, jaṁ, jhaṁ, nyaṁ, taṁ, thaṁ namaḥ*. As I go on contemplating this, I see the aspiration coming up from down and the grace descending there. That's all. I hand myself over to the divine power, then come up to the space.

All these, including the two in the two petals or radii in the forehead, add up to 50 radii, which compose the 50 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. 50, multiplied into 20 is 1,000. Why multiplied into 20? You can multiply with 50, if you like. Why not? There is no why, no reason for it. That becomes the thousand-petaled-lotus. That is: there is no essential difference between what we call the individual and the cosmic being, except that one is a little smaller than the other, limited in it here.

A peculiarity is that in Sanskrit also, the first letter is *a*. The last letter is *h*. *A-ha-m* means *I*. I is not more than the first and the last letters of the alphabet, brought together, so that you are no more than a word. I am no more than a word. Or: I is no more than a word.

All that is brought together and realized as the truth. These elements are withdrawn, *laya*, all the radii are absorbed in the central core, the central core is lifted up, the radii are again absorbed into the central core, and if this meditation is practiced with great intensity and awareness, naturally some tremendous transformation takes place. That's the whole story.

It’s a tremendously interesting science – in the sense of *knowledge*, not of *test-tube* or *laboratory* – and unfortunately, because by some in some places it seems to have been misused and in varied ways has somehow come out of vogue. Somewhere it is said that it should not be revealed, and somewhere, that it should be revealed.

Visualization of these centers, the *cakra*s, is of course based on somebody's experience. Some yogis have left records of what they saw, what they experienced, and the student has to proceed from somewhere to somewhere. So, I take this as a point of reference or a pointer to a possibility: it's possible that it is like that. There is a little bit of faith, probably a belief, and I've got to work from there. The whole system depends entirely upon the intensity and the clarity of the visualization.

Are there these centers located in the body? Perhaps yes, perhaps no. There are two viewpoints again. There have been some doctors who say that they have discovered some physiological correspondences, and there are others who vehemently protest: „This has nothing to do with your physical body. It's all in the subtle body, the astral body." What exactly is the astral body and how, with which instrument, do I become aware of what is in the astral body, I do not know. So, when I look within, what do I do? Nothing.

How do you visualize your own spinal column? You have seen it in anatomical charts, you believe them to be true; you have faith in these medical scientists who have given these charts. Exactly the same way it is here with this. If I believe the medical's scientist's version of the physical body and its parts to be true; with equal logic, reason, and common sense, I trust the mystic who says that these *cakra*s are in the body, and these are the shapes, and these are the colors. I take him at his face value.

The mystic does not believe that these things have any physical correspondence at all, they're all in your subtle body. He discounts the reality of the physical body as a crystallization of your own thoughts. What is the physical body except that you think it is there as a solid thing? Stand in front of the x-ray: the physical body is nearly gone.

We have these electric furnaces now, in crematoriums, and if the body is pushed into that furnace without the coffin, they cannot even retrieve a handful of ashes; there is nothing left. What you call *the physical body* is nothing, it's emptiness. Like the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* says repeatedly: „All this is empty, void." In that, there is a thought, and that thought has assumed the shape of the body, and because it is thought that has assumed the shape of this body, thought thinks it is true.

One who contemplates these centers must be able to visualize them with utmost clarity and intensity, and that's the whole secret of it. When you concentrate on or visualize the earth center, your whole being becomes that earth center, and in the same way water, same way fire, same way air, and when you come up to this space center, you become space.

We are made of 86 percent water. So, it's not difficult to see that the whole physical body is pure water at one stage. And in that water, there are minor particles of matter floating, so it's not impossible to visualize the whole body as earth, at one stage. There is interpenetrating temperature or heat in the system, and therefore it's possible at that stage to visualize the whole body as fire. And in the same way air.

Then comes this space: „I'm like space." If you have been practicing this with tremendous intensity, you have forgotten the body right from the beginning. You are earth, you are water, you are fire, you are air, and finally you are space, completely one; you are one with the space. It's beautiful if it is done properly.

When it comes to the *ājñā*, they do not describe it in great detail, except to say that it is like lightning. What is like lightning in my body, and what is the color of lightning, and the phenomenon of the lightning, you will only know if you are space! And that's why the space center comes before. Once that is done, *ākāśavat sarvagato nityaḥ* (*Brahma Sūtra* 2.3.21) – this body has disintegrated, and I have become one with the infinite space. It is there that I see lightning.

It is visualization, not only imagination. I see it almost as real. To facilitate this contemplation, this concentration and meditation, I have to get the feeling, the grasp of it. There are a few techniques which may be of help with this. These are described both in the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* and the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*.

The first is called the *mahāmudrā*. The left heel is on the perineum, the right leg is stretched out right-angled to the body. Grasp your foot and hold it. In *paścimottānāsana* and *jānu-śīrṣāsana* you exhale and go down to the knees; this is different. Hang on there, look at your toes. Or, better still, look at your spine, look at the backbone from there. Look at yourself within. Visualize the *suṣumnā* as going right through the body, as a radiant channel. Inhale deeply, hold the breath and drop your chin on the chest.

While there, try to focus your attention on the eyebrow center. Hold the breath as long as possible. Let the concentration on the *suṣumnā* be intense. If the heel is pressed firmly against the perineum, you should know exactly where the *suṣumnā* commences. If the eyes are concentrated on the eyebrow center, you will know where it ends, too. Exhale very slowly, they say, as slowly as possible. This is known as *mahāmudrā*. It is not difficult at all – that is what has to be avoided. It's a *mudrā*, it's a *seal*, and therefore, there is firmness all around. Do it on both sides an equal number of times till you feel that you are visualizing the central channel.

The next one is known as *mahābandha*. The left heel is at the perineum again, the right foot on the left thigh – not exactly like *siddhāsana*, but not unlike *siddhāsana*. Inhale, drop the chin on the chest, at the same time practice *mūla-bandha*. Place the palms on the floor next to you. The *mūla-bandha* must be firmly kept while you contemplate on the *suṣumnā* and on the eyebrow-center again.

The last is *mahāvedha*. *Mahāvedha* is also practiced holding the breath in. Take a deep breath again, drop the chin on the chest, place the palms down, raise yourself by stretching the arms and drop. That's it. These three are practiced together.

Mahā means *great*. They are great because the others are preliminaries to these. It is customary to get worried about this word *mahā*; when it becomes *mahā*, it must be difficult. But they are not difficult at all, from the ordinary physiological point of view. Most important is that you concentrate on that whole thing. The whole thing is one! That is how you get into meditation.

Meditation is not fixed-point staring. Meditation is a movement within a limited area:

Deśa-bandhaḥ cittasya dhāraṇā (*Yoga Sūtras* 3.1).

The *citta*, the mind, is not completely fixed. There is movement, but movement within a very limited area. To be able to limit the field of attention is not easy. Can I become of the totality of just the *suṣumnā*? Then it is possible for me to go into the details of it.

In connection with this, there is also one more *mudrā* which can be learned quite easily, called *khecarīmudrā*. There are quite a few texts describing it, some of them nearly forbidding and others quite gentle. It's supposed to involve cutting the *frenum* of the tongue gradually, and milking the tongue till one is able like a cow to touch the forehead. After that, you turn the tongue back upon itself. This is the preparation for the *khecarīmudrā*.

Lastly, there is what is known as the *yonimudrā*. It's very simple and also very interesting. Push your thumbs into the earholes so that the ear is blocked. With the index fingers close the eyes by drawing the eyelids over the eyeballs and press them against the cheekbones. The middle fingers take care of the nostrils – I'll come back to that later. The ring fingers are on the upper lip, the little fingers under the lower lip.

Now, there are two variations in the technique. One, which Swami Sivananda recommended: you let go your middle fingers when you want to breathe in and out and keep the nostrils closed when you hold your breath. But some texts recommend what is known as *kākīmudrā*: keep your nostrils closed tight, and while closing the lips, make a pouch with the lips. I prefer Swami Sivananda's method.

This is used to help us with the visualization and the concentration. It is interesting to visualize the centers in this *mudrā*. The yogi believes that if you listen intensely, you will hear some mystic sounds in your right ear, or if you're left-handed in your left ear. It is excellent for the meditation upon the *cakra*s because it completely blocks out all distractions. *Yoni* means the *uterus*. This is supposed to be a complete sealing off, and therefore, *haṭha* yogis who are specialized in this, sit in *siddhāsana*, which also seals off the lower apertures. Then, all the holes in the body are closed, sealed off! Therefore, it is called a *mudrā*, a *seal*.

The sound is supposed to come along with the *yonimudrā* and to be heard when you close your ears. Some *haṭha* yogis have even experienced different types of sound and listed ten of them: like bell, like flute, like lute, like thunder, and finally like the roaring ocean. Without the information that somebody has had that experience, you practice *yonimudrā* and listen intensely, right ear or left ear. But listen somewhere, at one point. Why is it so? Then your whole attention is funneled there.

There was a custom that when somebody initiated you in the *mantram*, they whispered it into the right ear of the recipient. The mantra is well-known, millions of people repeat it, it's no secret. Why does one whisper? So that I can listen! This whispering into one's ear is meant merely to enhance the concentration, the attention.

This is one version. My own, much simpler common-sense feeling is: what is known as *anāhata* may be something much simpler. The word *anāhata* means *unstruck*. *Ahata* means *striking*. One object striking

another is the normal way of producing a sound, *ahata* sound. *Anāhata* is the opposite of it, a sound produced by non-striking. What you call mental repetition of a mantra is also unstruck sound. You hear the sound within you, and yet you are not producing the sound by the throat.

This is terribly unorthodox: it is already *anāhata* when without anything striking another, I hear this sound of the mantra. Why must I look for an extraordinary phenomenon? The ordinary phenomenon itself is puzzling! By directing the attention onto it and inquiring into it, I can arrive at some truth. I can arrive at an understanding of the mind, I can arrive at an understanding of myself, which is self-knowledge.

In *yonimudrā,* don`t let your elbows drop down. The body must be straight, and the elbows can only rest on something outside. They can be as high up in the air as possible, without strain. If you are a serious student of yoga, you make probably use of a yoga *daṇḍa*, a T-shaped stick, one stick to rest your elbows on both sides.

This is called *śāmbhavīmudrā* in *haṭha* yoga. It is also more a spiritual exercise than anything physical. Sit relaxed, looking, but without seeing anything, without wanting to see anything, without wanting to hear anything, and without wanting to smell anything. What are you not seeing? In other words: while the eyes are looking out, your attention is looking within to see that no percept is formed, no concept is formed.

As you can immediately see, this is also a form of seal, *mudrā*. The consciousness is sealed, prevented from externalization, raising an object within itself. There is also another definition of the word *mudrā*, which means a *fountain of joy*. When all this externalization is abandoned, there is experience of great joy within. That is the Tibetan version of *mahāmudrā*.

The most famous hand *mudrā,* which is a gesture or a symbol, is called *cinmudrā*, where the tips of index finger and thumb are joined. *Cit* is consciousness: the *mudrā* that denotes *cit*, or wisdom, or highest consciousness. The significance is: abandon the three and realize, this and that are one.

In this symbolism, the thumb denotes cosmic being, the index finger the individual. The individual and the cosmic together form one circle, one whole, all the triplicities and trinities are ruthlessly kept away: waking, dream, sleep; creation, sustenance, destruction; the physical body, the subtle body, the causal body; father, son, holy ghost; the whole lot: Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva – all these are drowned in the lake and it is realized that what I have been calling the individual is one with the supreme. Another aspect of this *mudrā* is: detachment is not isolationism or alienation, but freedom, and only in that freedom there can be love.

10 *Laya* Yoga: The Return of the Spiral

Haṭha yoga texts consider the hearing of the *anāhata* as the final point of *haṭha* yoga: you close your ears and listen intensely in your right ear. You hear some sound, and as you go on and the *nāḍī*s are getting more and more purified, it is said that you will hear progressively finer and more subtle sounds. Allowing the mind to be totally immersed in that sound itself is the consummation of *haṭha* yoga.

Some other contemplations are also mentioned. To focus your attention upon the various *cakra*s, in tune with the earth element, water element, fire element, is also described in some *haṭha* yoga scriptures as if one who has completely merged himself in the water element cannot drown – that sort of thing.

There is just a little confusion, if you watch very carefully: all of them seem to indicate some kind of mastery over natural elements, and mastery does imply the retention of the ego-sense. The ego says: „I can walk on water“. Cosmic consciousness does not say: „I can walk on water“. Cosmic consciousness is under water, inside water, above water. It *is* water.

However, this is above all these magic rituals. Merging into sound, *nādānusandhāna* as it is called, is adoration of the sound, contemplation of the inner sound. The sound is also represented by color, the whole universe being composed of name and form together. Name is form and form is name. These two are indistinguishably one, identical. They are not two different things; you cannot conjure up the word *water* without water appearing in your mind's eye.

The idea is that every vibration has a sound value and a color value. When the vibration is apprehended by the ear, it is heard as sound. When the same vibration is seen by the eyes, it is experienced as color. Once you have sort of digested that, you suddenly see a whole new dimension opening up.

Therefore, the contemplation of the *nāda* is the consummation of *haṭha* yoga. It is in order that this *nāda* or inner sound can be heard without distortion that the *nāḍī*s are purified. You see the whole thing rolling down! In order that this sound may be heard clearly and in order that my whole being may be absorbed in that sound, the inner mystic sound, when my whole being is absorbed in that inner mystic sound, the ego-sense is dispersed and there is liberation, there is freedom – in order that that may happen, it is important that the *nāḍī*s should be pure. When the *nāḍī*s are not pure, the *nāda* is not heard.

To purify the *nāḍī*s, I must practice *prāṇāyāma*. When I practice *prāṇāyāma*, I must have a clear idea of the *iḍā* and the *piṅgala* and the *suṣumnā*, of the *cakra*s involved in it, and I must also know where and how the obstruction has taken place in the flow of *prāṇa*. In order that all this can be effected and the *prāṇāyāma* can be practiced properly, I must practice *āsana*s. And in order that the *āsana*s can be practiced and the *prāṇāyāma* can be practiced effectively, I must practice all these purificatory processes. So, the whole thing is one block.

Laya is *absorption*, dissolution: the entire personality must once again be dissolved in this *nāda*. And that is when the spiral returns to its center. The spiraling is distorted music, cacophony, and when this

spiral returns, there is progressive absorption and dissolution, when you finally come to that point where you hear the *nāda* and absorb into it.

The final point is also called the *bindu*. *Bindu* is the final point which was also the beginning: „I am the Alpha and the Omega, I am the beginning and I am the end" (*Revelation* 22:13). This is where the whole process spiraled out, and that is where it dissolves.

However, this *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* also suggests three types of meditation. Unlike other scriptures, the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* to some extent follows Patañjali's *aṣṭāṅga* yoga. The three types of *dhyāna* are known as *sthūla-dhyāna*, *jyoti-dhyāna* and *sūkṣma-dhyāna*. *Sthūla* is *gross, jyoti* is *light*. *Sūkṣma* is the opposite of *sthūla*: an extremely subtle form of meditation.

Though this follows the pattern of *rāja*-yoga, this *sthūla-dhyāna* or meditation on a gross form leads us towards what can turn to *bhakti*, devotion. We do not know who the author of the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* was and what kind of cultural background he had. He describes a type of contemplation that is quite common amongst certain classes of devotees in India: „Visualize in your heart a nice little temple, with a lovely golden dome, and right in the center of it, visualize a full-blown lotus, and in the center of that, a jeweled, dazzling throne, and on it …" All the superlatives are brought into this, so that the mind is attracted to it. On that throne visualize your deity. But they don't say: „your deity", they describe a deity for you to contemplate. When it comes to that, you see that it was *his* deity! So that a Christian might say: „Put Jesus Christ on it", like in the *Revelations*. A Buddhist might say: „This must be a Buddha." That is something with which *he* is familiar, something which has been part of his experience of reality.

„Visualize this deity, sitting on the throne, ready to grant all your boons and ready to dispel all your fears" – this is the common feature. All these Gods must guarantee these two: they must grant all my boons, and they must dispel my fears. Why not face the fears and go through it? Why must I go to God for that?

That is the *sthūla-dhyāna*: my mind is not subtle, my mind is not capable to enter into the subtler regions. It is gross, I am body-bound, body-conscious, so I cannot completely jump on my own shoulders. That's not possible, don't try that. Realize in what stage of development you are and adapt your meditation to that stage of development.

Since all that I know of myself is that I am the body, gross, physical, material, I use a materialistic approach towards the truth also. This earth is extremely subtle, it is not what it appears to gross eyes to be, it is also a mass of dancing electrons, it's energy. Yet in my present state of development, I see it as solid earth, and therefore let me contemplate on God also as something solid, and the supreme spirit also as something solid.

There is no harm in it, as long as you don't hold the book over the head of anybody else and say as a stick to beat anybody up: „This has been prescribed here, so you must also do the same thing. Visualize an ocean!" I know of some people who have never seen an ocean before.

It's improper to force the same type of visualization upon everybody else. One must find one's own. I'm not even talking in terms of your culture versus my culture. Even in what is called *my culture*, there are a

thousand variations. Even in what you call *your culture*, there are a thousand variations: some people like the crucifix and some people don't like the crucifix. Each one will have to find out from one's own inner predisposition, having understood the basic doctrine, the philosophy in it.

I am body-conscious, gross, physical at present, and therefore I need a physical symbol on which the mind can easily rest and focus – that's the only principle. One might say: „Is one not bluffing oneself by sort of visualizing within oneself an ocean and a temple and a shrine? Is that sanctioning hallucination?" Perhaps not. It is the other end of the spiral. The world that you're seeing is already hallucination. How do you know that what you're seeing is true? Why not replace this hallucination by that? At least, by raising that hallucination, your confirmed conviction of the reality of this world-hallucination is shaken and gone.

You sit in your own meditation room, and you contemplate on all this. Wonderful: the ocean, the orbit of the sun, the mountain or whatever you wish to contemplate on, and a throne there, and someone sitting on it, with seven candles, and for the time being that appears to be absolutely real. You are able to touch that person, you are able to talk to that person. Then you open your eyes: „Was that all hallucination?" Maybe this is hallucination, too. What's the difference? Something shakes within. That's enough! Then you don't take anything for granted. From there on, you're inquiring. An inquiring mind never gets caught!

The basis of what is called *non-attachment* or *psychological freedom* is the spirit of inquiry. If this spirit of inquiry is there constantly, without let-up even for a second, it never gets attached. It's questioning; not doubting, merely questioning: „If that is hallucination, maybe this is hallucination, too". And if this imaginary being turns round and says: „You are a fool!", must I fight with a hallucination, with a phantom – what for?

Therefore, the spirit of inquiry itself is the answer to attachment, detachment, non-attachment. It gives me my freedom, total freedom, not only from external forces, but also from internal forces. And I was devoted: I see such a good man; I'm all admiration. This may be as much of an illusion as that. So, I'm questioning what is seen outside and I'm questioning the seer also.

Questioning, not doubting! The seer obviously exists, as there is an existence which is misinterpreted as the object. The subject is real, obviously real: There is a subject. But it may not be *as* the subject! Because the word *subject* and the concept of a subject relate directly to the object: It is the object that creates the subject. And there is obviously an object, otherwise there would be no subject, there was no vision. Hence, I am questioning the object, I am questioning the subject, but not doubting the existence of existence. It is in the spirit of inquiry that pure freedom is born.

It may be that the orthodox people who read this and write comments on it will be cross if they are told that all this tremendous meditation is only to rouse this spirit of inquiry. But when the mind is able to reach a slightly more subtle dimension, it does not need to divert itself, it is not so restless that you have to provide it with a whole paraphernalia to make your gaze steady and enable your mind to focus easily.

When does that happen? When the whole *haṭha* yoga has been practiced, when the *nāḍī*s are pure, when the nerves are calm and when the mind is steady. Then the attention becomes steady, too.

For this gross meditation upon an elaborate form – not only a physical form but an elaborate form – you can visualize a single flame: *jyoti-dhyāna*. The *jyoti* can be in the *mūlādhāra cakra* or various other *cakra*s or between the eyebrows – just a brilliant flame, steady, un-agitated. It is possible to contemplate that and allow the mind to be merged in it.

Sūkṣma-dhyāna is rather complicated; complicated in the sense that one has to absorb a lot of the doctrines of *haṭha* yoga before one can really grasp its significance. It involves the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī* and the merging of the *kuṇḍalinī* in the *sahasrāra*, where we discussed this *bindu*. The spiral has turned upon itself, and found the center, which is the *bindu.*

That *bindu*, it is said, refuses to be confined to the physical body. When the *haṭha* yogi practices what has been referred to as *śāmbhavīmudrā*, which from the physical aspect is mere wakened gaze and when the *kuṇḍalinī* has reached the *bindu*, it shines like a blue diamond. When the eyes are vacantly unfocused, it is said that this *bindu* or this blue, pearl-like radiance, emerges through the eyes and as it were stands in front of the yogi in that twelve-inch space – what we have discussed as the magnetic field – guiding him from there on in all that he has to do. Its color is said to be blue, and I'm wondering again: is that why all Indian Gods are blue? Kṛṣṇa is blue, Rāma is blue, Viṣṇu is blue – all these deities or Gods are blue.

These are three forms of meditation that are described in the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* beautifully. In the *sthūla*, in the gross form of meditation, one may also use one or the other of these *cakra*s, each one of which is an elaborate *maṇḍala*. *Maṇḍala*-meditation is both a psychological adventure and may also function as the union archetype, integrating the whole thing with the whole. And if one gradually comes up in that way, passing from one *cakra* to the other, once again we find that in the *ājñā,* there is the flame, there is a light, and one contemplates the light eventually.

Karma Yoga

1 The Discovery of the Ego

We should recapitulate the basic meaning of the word *yoga* and the sense in which we use it in these discussions before proceeding further and trying to look at what *karma* might mean.

The dictionary gives innumerable senses in which the word *yoga* is used. The sense in which we use the word *yoga* is not so much a union of two different or independent things. To take a simple example: if you look at an open bottle, you see that there is some space in that bottle, confined to the bottle, confined by the bottle, and there is space outside it, so there is a division, and when that bottle is broken, there is an apparent union of the space in the bottle with the space outside the bottle.

It doesn't take long to realize that space is indivisible, and therefore this division was apparent, it is not real. But then, before this realization, before it is realized that space is indivisible, there has appeared to be a space confined to the bottle. When the bottle is broken, there is again an apparent union of the space within and the space without. That is the only sense in which we use the word *yoga* in all our discussions here. It is not *coming-together*, it is not *mixing*, it is not *union*, it is not *integration*. The space was never divided. The division was apparent, illusory, conceptual.

When I hold my arm straight, am I dividing the space in this and that? No. Does it mean I'm pushing the space? No, it's impossible to push the space. And yet I see, or I seem to see, or I think I see, or I believe I see that there is this side and that side, that there is a space in front of this palm and there is a space behind the palm. When I withdraw this hand, the two spaces become one space – the most ridiculous expression you have ever heard. And that is called *yoga*.

This is what we saw in the study of *haṭha* yoga: the dividing factor being the self, the ego-sense, we stand on our head, hold our breath, do all sorts of things to realize that the self does not exist as the microphone exists. The self is not a factual entity. All our efforts at giving up the self, transcending the self, destroying the self, have proved ineffective because we are trying to remove something which does not exist. We are trying to cure a phantom pain. Instead of dealing with it at its own origin and seeing it as not existent, we are trying to cure it, and thereby endowing it with an apparent reality.

In a frantic attempt at getting rid of it, you are giving it a reality, you are giving it a value. And this is true of all notions. This is the mistake we commit in the matter of giving up these famous bad habits. I've never seen a cigarette jumping into somebody's mouth, nor a goblet of wine pouring down somebody's throat. It is when I say: „It's terrible, a dreadful habit!" that I'm attracted to it. "Oh Lord, it's the devil that tempts me!" There is no devil. By calling it a *bad habit* I made it a habit. You pick up a cigarette, smoke and say: „Stay there!", and it stays there. You don't think it's a habit, you don't think it is bad, you don't think it is good; there's no value at all, cigarette is cigarette, fingers are fingers and lungs are lungs – there's no relation or connection at all between the one and the other.

Then it's gone! In a moment, it's gone. So, the so-called ego-sense is created in your rebellion against it. But the moment we open our eyes to this, we have created it, the ghost is there. You hold the glass-jar in front of you and you see that there is a space inside and a space outside. And so, we go right back to the source of this to become aware of that which is beyond self.

Why do I call it *beyond self*? Because we started with accepting the self as an apparent or even illusory, temporary reality. That it does not exist, in truth, in fact, is not our realization, right? That's why it's called self-*realization*: that it is not true is not our realization. The oneness of existence, the oneness of space is not what I see. I see this as a room and that as an outside of the room. I see that as space and this as not-space. As far as I'm concerned, this is room and that is space. Since I am in this trap, what do I do? That is the point.

One has to ensure that this trap is not strengthened, and I see that the trap becomes stronger by acceptance and rejection. If I love it and call it *a fortress of security*, it's there I'm perpetuating it. If I keep kicking against it, I break my legs, and therefore I'm in it again. Is there a third method whereby I understand that the trap is no trap, that it was trap because I thought it was trap? That is seeing the totality without being trapped by the fragment. You are holding up the glass-jar, you're looking at it and you think: „My God, why did I think that this space moves? It doesn't move. The glass moves, the space does not move."

The indivisibility of space suddenly becomes real to you, and you're no more bothered about glass-jar or no glass-jar; let it be there or let it go to pieces. That is called *yoga*. And that is why it's called *realization*. Not because the totality became unreal at any stage, but your consciousness assumed the existence of this fragment or trap, and instead of realizing the totality kept struggling against the trap itself, thereby giving it a reality.

So, in *haṭha* yoga I'm not interested in keeping this trap sturdy, or in living for multiples of 320 billion years; all that is not the aim or the ambition. The aim, if there could be an aim, is to realize that there is something which is outside of the self, outside in the sense that it is not trapped. It cannot be trapped, it is indivisible. That which this body obeys, that which controls this body, enables this body to live and to die, to grow and to decay, that is beyond the self. And that is yoga.

Yoga is the realization of the indivisibility of consciousness, the indivisibility of energy, an indivisibility that alone is true, that alone exists. Now, what is *karma?*

Let's also realize that this yoga is indivisible. It is not as though there is a *haṭha* yogi, and you become a *karma* yogi, and someone else becomes a *rāja* yogi; the yoga is indivisible. We saw in the study of *haṭha* yoga that it involves devotion, *bhakti*, it involves meditation, which is traditionally regarded as the province of *rāja* yoga. It involves deep understanding which is considered the prerogative of *jñāna* yoga. There is no division in yoga at all.

The word *karma* just means *action*, nothing more. In a way *haṭha* yoga, the practice of yoga *āsana*s, *prāṇāyāma*, et cetera is also an action, *karma.* Action can be either mental action, which is thought, verbal action, which is speaking, or physical action, which is work. You may call that work *sādhana*, *yoga*

practice, or you may call that work *administration*, you may call that work *business*, you may call that work *service*, you can call this *charity* – anything you like, but it is work, pure and simple.

There is no specific text on *karma* yoga, though there are two texts dealing with this aspect of yoga. One is called *Mīmāṃsā*. That was really not *karma* yoga as such, though in those days it was considered to be so. The other text which most of us use is the *Bhagavad Gītā*. That is really the gospel of action, and therefore gospel of *karma* yoga.

In the latter, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, there is a realistic statement:

> *Na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma kṛt* (3.5).

„You cannot remain doing nothing even for a single moment." That's obvious.

Even when your parents described you to others: „Ah, my son is good for nothing, he does not do anything!", they were obviously bluffing, because it's not possible for anyone to do nothing. I can *drop out*, that's a beautiful expression. I can drop out of your conveyer belt and find liberation, that's a different thing. But I cannot do nothing. I may not do what you think is *doing*, but I'm sitting! I'm sitting idly, yes. Lying down is some doing, sitting is some doing, gazing at the ceiling is some doing: gazing. Kṛṣṇa gave expression to this in a very beautiful way. *Na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma kṛt*: you have a body which is endowed with some energy. As long as the energy is there, there is motion and therefore action.

We're all doing something! And this action seems to confirm the spiral, the movement away from the center. Because we have this fixed idea in our mind that all motion must be away from the center, we are unable to realize that any motion in infinity does not leave the infinity. That will become clear when the glass-jar is understood to be moving without moving the space in it. So, the action itself seems to create a duality, a motion away from self.

Then you ask: „Why am I doing this?" There is a motion which implies movement away from the center, and side by side with it, there is a motivation. It is the motivation that keeps the whole thing going. Since the motivation is related to the motion, the motivation becomes the goal and the goal is far away from the center, from where I started.

This is simple horse-racing: the starting point is somewhere and then the goalpost is somewhere else. I start from here, and the *karma* is running. Where do I run? I must reach that place, the goalpost. Our mind is unable to get out of this trinity and complication: the starting point, the action, and the goal.

So, the whole life is goal-oriented, goal-motivated: there is an action and there's a motivation. I am motivated by this action, and I must go and reach that point, that place. Kṛṣṇa saw this: action is inevitable. As long as there is energy, motion is inevitable. But then, as long as this motion is there, motivation also seems to be inevitable.

Now, both the action and the motivation are fraught with millions of dangers: there could be wrong movement which could destroy all of us, there could be wrong motivation which might destroy all of us.

They saw that, and yet it became difficult to stop the motion, which is not possible, it's against nature, nor to take the motivation away, which seemed to be super-human. At some stage, they provided some motivation, and they provided a lot of motion.

I love children, and so they usually come prowling around. If they are a bit naughty, you look at them and know they're full of energy, they're bubbling! If they are mischievous and sort of disturbing, take hold of them, and play with them, and romp with them for fifteen minutes. When all that bubbling energy is worked out, they get fatigued, lie down and sleep. More or less, this is what they described as *Mīmāṃsā*.

You can be mischievous, right, and so they packed your day from half past four in the morning till ten o'clock with such activity that you are looking for the ten o'clock when it's finished, then you go to bed and sleep. Naturally there's no time for any mischief!

There is a small book called *Āhnika. Āhnika* means *daily routine*, and it represents the daily routine of a Brahmin. He's supposed to get out of bed between four and half past four, and even as soon as he opens his eyes, the text prescribes which kind of mantras, which kind of prayers he should say. As soon as you open your eyes, you start saying: „Oh, my God." From there on it's one round of rituals and prayers, prayers and rituals; bathing is ritual, brushing your teeth is ritual, and cooking is ritual, eating is ritual. Action is inevitable, so pack that action with what was considered proper motivation.

In ancient India, right action and right motivation were considered sufficient to take the sting out of *karma.* What was the motivation? The motivation was going to heaven. That was the mischief. Because all the time, there is a motivation there. Why am I doing this? „I want to go to heaven, I don't want to go to hell". And so, I'm doing all this. Understanding was not emphasized till Kṛṣṇa came along.

Kṛṣṇa saw that once some motivation was given the label of *right motivation*, it opens the door to all sorts of mischief. You can kill your enemy; that's considered righteous, you will get a medal. The more you kill, the bigger the medal becomes. If you kill one man, you're hanged, if you kill ten, you get promoted, if you kill a thousand, you get decorated; that's called *death-ministration*.

Why is it right to kill so many of them? Because they are all our enemies! I suddenly realize that all that I need to do to kill all those people and get away with it is to call them *enemies*. I become a politician, then I'm alright.

Kṛṣṇa saw that as long as motivation was considered right, the mind will cook up a motivation for anything. I can always provide a motivation; I can call it a *right* motivation, so that any action can be justified and made into a right action.

In the *Bhagavad Gītā,* that trend was not only stopped, but reversed. He throws the whole thing away and says: „Don't look for heaven." Kṛṣṇa doesn't say in so many words that heaven doesn't exist, but he at least says that it's useless going to heaven.

Traiguṇyaviṣayā vedā nistraiguṇyo bhavā 'rjuna (2.45):

As long as you're caught up in this motivation, there is still a movement away from the center, and as long as there is movement away from the center, you will keep remaining confused and there is no yoga.

How to get back to the center and how to discover what seeks motivation, what supplies the motivation, what drives on this motivation, what takes advantage of the motivation? Can one see that as the ego? It is the ego that seeks the motivation, it is the ego that needs the motivation, it is the ego that supplies the motivation, and it is the ego that feeds on it and thrives on it. The discovery of this truth is *karma* yoga.

The discovery of this truth is *karma* yoga, discovery in the purest, simplest sense. Once the truth is discovered, it is like the jar being broken. It was the jar that seemed to enclose the space, and when this cover is removed, space is realized as indivisible. Discovery does not mean the coming into being of something which was not there before. Discovery merely means that the cover is shed, and when that cover is taken away, that what is forever one is seen to be indivisibly one at all times.

To keep the motion without motivation, that's *karma* yoga. The motion has to be retained, because it is inevitable. You cannot arrest the motion, but the motivation can be stalled.

By the discovery of the truth of the indivisibility of consciousness, the motion in consciousness is seen also to be beyond the self. And that is pure, selfless or unselfish life and living. When you realize that consciousness is indivisible and that motion is inherent in that consciousness, you realize that that motion is beyond self. That realization is true unselfish or selfless action.

Karma yoga is therefore the action or the activity of a perfected person, enlightened person. And yet, the steps towards this perfection are also regarded as *karma* yoga: what I do in order that I may reach this realization is also by courtesy included in the term *karma* yoga.

Otherwise, *karma* yoga is not what we do. Just because I am washing dishes without being paid, I'm not doing unselfish action, *karma* yoga. That's sort of an extension, by courtesy. *Karma* yoga in truth is the action of an enlightened person in whose vision there is not division at all, who has directly realized the indivisibility of consciousness and the indivisibility of consciousness and motion in it – within *it*, therefore not within me.

I think we have treated not only *karma* yoga, but yoga in general as a sort of doing: if I practice *haṭha* yoga, what do I do? If I practice *karma* yoga, what do I do? If I'm going to be a *bhakta*, what must I do? We hope that by doing something we'll become what we are supposed to be. It's a complicated expression: by doing something we hope that we become what we are supposed to be.

Dressing up a man like an expectant mother by putting a pillow around his waist doesn't make him a woman! The whole process takes place inside. It is from within outward. It is the attitude that comes first, the wisdom is what comes first. Once the wisdom is there, the knowledge is there, the action flows; naturally it must flow. Therefore, the master said: „Be good, do good!" – be good first!

There was a funny squib in a Bombay newspaper when Swami Sivananda was on the All-India Tour, in 1950. He had devoted a whole public meeting to his exposition of just these two mottos, *be good* and *do good*. He was famous for it. This man, a freelance journalist, must have been there in the audience, and I don't know why, but he got hold of the wrong end of the stick. The next morning, there was a lovely little sketch in the newspaper: „I heard Swami Sivananda say *be good and do good*." Naturally the *do good* was ringing in his ears: „And I thus resolved that I'll do good from now."

He impersonated a government clerk. „I meditated upon this, and got out of the house, of my flat, ran downstairs to get into the tramcar", and as he was walking to the tramcar, „I found an elderly woman walking ahead of me with a shopping-bag which was a bit too heavy. I ran towards her and from behind I held that bag and said: ‚Madam, may I help?' And she gave it to me: ‚Help! Thief! Robber!' There was a small crowd around me, and they hit me. I explained to them: ‚I'm only trying to be good and do good!' They wouldn't listen."

He went on describing a whole's day misadventures. „And all of this because I listened to this man's *be good and do good*." But then, what he had forgotten was that he was *trying* to be good. The idea is first to *be* good! If I ensure that there is absolutely no ill-will in my heart, nothing but good in my heart, then that good will know how to act.

2 Motivations

We were discussing the inevitability of motion, since energy is inherent in consciousness and energy means motion. The movement of energy in consciousness is conscious movement. Motion being inevitable, action being inevitable, it is the goal that supplies motivation or the motivation that creates the goal – we do not know. Vaguely we see already that this goal-oriented motion is a troublemaker.

We cannot cancel something which has already arisen. We'll come back to that again when we discuss the different types of *karma.* The famous example given is that of an arrow which has left the bow – it cannot be recalled. When we become aware of the facts concerning our life on earth, we already realize that we are caught in this spiral. It is a movement away from the center.

A movement in the center itself is not a movement. Movement towards the center is a circle, there's no movement in it. If you watch the wheel spinning very fast, you don't see any movement at all, it is still because it is completing the circle 10,000 times a second, and there is no movement. A movement or motion is noticed only when the movement is away from the center, which is a spiral movement. Only a spiral movement, or movement away from the center, is seen, observed, felt, experienced.

That is the situation in our life, all goal-oriented motion being movement away from the center. That is where we are caught. Discussing *karma* yoga, we are getting right back to the *kuṇḍalinī* and the spiral. You'll probably see that the spiral doesn't leave us throughout the course. I'm deliberately introducing the spiral again here, to sort of demythologize this *kuṇḍalinī* and make it relevant to our everyday living. It's there, it's there everywhere. It's not merely a sort of strange, mysterious power that the yogi sitting in an icy cave, that the guru in the Himalayas awakes. It's there, functioning everywhere in our life, if only we see it. If we don't see it, that's a different story.

We open our eyes and immediately we are caught in this goal-orientation. You enter a sports-ground – the first thing you see is the goal post. You enter life – the first thing you are told is, the goal is to do so-and-so. So, it's no use merely blinking and saying the goal does not exist. It does exist. Even if you make up your mind: „I'm not going to have any goal, I'm going to be free", that freedom becomes your goal, *mokṣa*.

It's built into us. As soon as I wake up I see that my life is caught in the trap called *hope*. Unless I have the courage to see the unreal as unreal, I do not deserve the realization of the real. And therefore, we may have to discuss what we may later discard as unreal and worthless.

Seeing that life is goal-oriented, men all over the world suggested a four-fold motivation. I'm keen on that word *four-fold* as they are not four different motivations. It is a single, four-fold motivation, four strands bound together. I'll give it to you in Sanskrit, but these four motivations are universal.

Dharma: for *dharma* you'll find also about a dozen different meanings. The meaning that we should adopt here is not so much *righteousness* as *order*. It amounts to the same thing. *Righteousness* is the word used from the pulpits, and *order* is the word used by a politician. The thing is the same. This is one strand of motivation: your goal should be to generate and sustain order in your life.

The second motivation or the second part of motivation is *artha*. It means a lot, again, as usual. Normally it is taken to mean *wealth*, material possession. That's also considered a valid goal for life. The third is *kāma* or the *pursuit of pleasure*, enjoyment. That's regarded as another valid goal. They don't have to say that, do they? Anyhow, they realized that it is something inevitable, so they said it. Eventually comes *mokṣa*, *liberation*. That liberation is liberation from all the rest of it.

However powerful the temptation to reach out to these goals may be, the center is constantly pulling you back. That may be one of the explanations of sleep, that throughout the rest of the day your consciousness is spread out, as far out as your intelligence can reach. You push yourself away, the center pulls you back. Probably that is why we feel fatigued! We feel fatigued, tired, worn-out because we are willfully driving ourselves, pushing ourselves out, defying this constant pull-back towards the center. At one stage, the center invariably wins.

That is how the spiral is not a straightforward circular movement away, but it goes up and down, up and down, up and down; it seems to be climbing out, away, but it still comes back up and down, the pull towards the center and the pull towards the self-assumed or self-appointed goal, for and against, towards and away, towards and away.

Our life is torn between these two: towards and away. We'll probably discuss this also in the *rāja* yoga discourse. This is one of the main themes of *rāja* yoga, that we are tormented inwardly by *rāga-dveṣa*: for and against – I like this, I don't like this. And so, the spiral builds up.

Towards and away, for and against. If you see that, you might also realize why for some people order in life is more important than earning wealth. In their case, the pull in that arc is stronger than the pull towards wealth. Some people are able to sacrifice a lot of pleasure in order to earn more wealth. In their case, the pull towards wealth is greater than the pull towards pleasure. Some are prepared, eager, and able, to abandon everything towards *mokṣa*: „I don't want any of these things, I'd rather be free." *Mokṣa* is freedom, total freedom from all this, from all this spiral movement, from all this impulse to move away from the center.

Looking at the spiral (

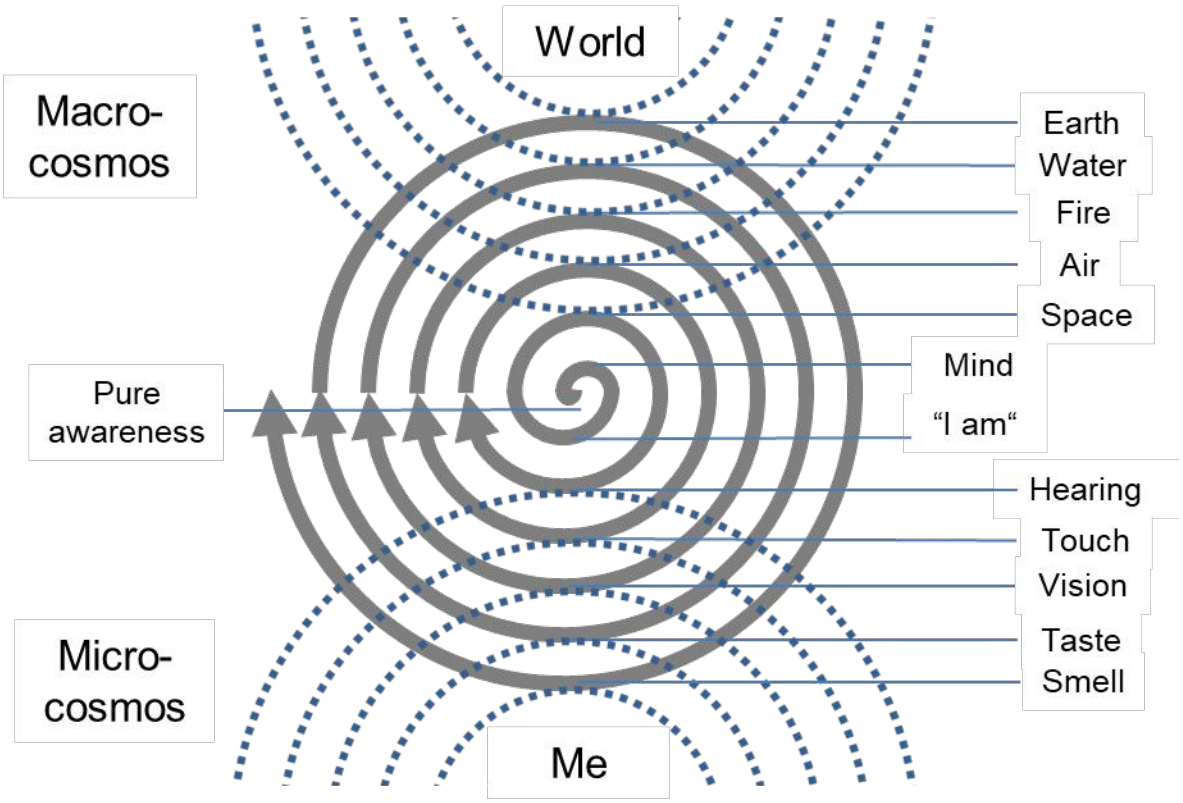


Figure 3) again, we see that every one of those spirals touches one's own personality within and, at the same time, the cosmos; the macrocosm and the microcosm being identical, counterparts of each other. Whatever is there, is here; whatever is here, is there. We are as it were tuning stations for the entire universe. In the case of this *karma* spiral, it is the same: Each action, represented by one spiral movement, touches the personality and also the external world or the universe, cosmos.

One arc says: „There must be order in my life, I must be righteous, and I must do good", and goes up as good action and its reaction. Another one says: „I must earn, and I must become wealthy", and that goes around as the action meant to acquire that wealth. It's like the horse with the blinkers: I'm only interested in earning wealth. It is a sanctioned goal of life and I'm going to do it. It touches inside: I'm going to become wealthy. That goes out as the action, motivated by desire to become wealthy. And it spreads out in the cosmos in its own way.

The internal effect, the microcosmic effect of that spiral, is called a *vāsanā* or *saṃskāra*. They are more or less interchangeable words, though *vāsanā* seems to be psychologically deeper. *Vāsanā* is the conditioning and the *saṃskāra* is the habit. *Habit* also means a dress! *Vāsanā* is the body and *saṃskāra* is the dress. *Vāsanā* is much deeper and more difficult to deal with.

The arc touching the microcosm leaves an impression there – *impression*, it's quite simple, isn't it? There's a pressure inside. There's a pressure in the microcosm that, with all the energy, motivation, goes out into the external cosmos or macrocosm and there it becomes what *karma* has unfortunately come

to mean: destiny, fate, reaction. That applies to all the three except the fourth; the fourth is not a goal as such.

Now we must shift a little away from our own preconceived idea of righteousness and order. Is there an order that is cosmic, which the individual does not create in his own mind? Perhaps: that is called *rtam* in Sanskrit, and that is equal to *mokṣa*, freedom. The cosmic world-order is beyond the ego-sense. It is not subject to conceptualization; it is beyond the human intellect. But what is meant by *dharma* in this context are rules and regulations we set for ourselves.

In all societies, not only in India, they try to divide society into several castes, whether you call it *castes* or *guilds* or *strata of society*. You may use different words, but they all mean the same: you have the intellectuals, the administrators, the traders, and us, the others. Every society has this kind of classification, and having created this division, someone who is accepted as an authority or who is powerful enough to make himself accepted as an authority.

Why is it that a scientist is regarded as an authority? Because we have accepted them as an authority. If you shrug your shoulders and flip your coats like you do when there is snowfall, all these authorities will drop away like the snowflakes: nothing more important than that, nothing more difficult than that. But still, we like somebody to be an authority. Someone who assumes authority lays down what the duties of these four castes or classes should be. That is very often regarded as *dharma*.

They likely change it, because often when it comes to this sort of order in society, nobody would notice or code the order against himself. You must all do your duty and respect a *saṃnyāsin* or a Brahmin! Do I also pick up the same book and roll a few pages more and see what the duty of a *saṃnyāsin* is? Then I run away and jump into the lake! Therefore, this type of order or *karma* is also subject to corruption, subject to perversion. When that perversion takes place, it leaves a stamp of perversion within the human mind, and it creates a reaction. That reaction also is called *karma.*

So, this *karma* has got three aspects now: the action itself with its motivation, and, number two, the impression that it leaves on the individual, in his own heart, in his own personality, which is the *vāsanā* or the *saṃskāra*, and thirdly the reaction it brings about in the cosmos. That spiral comes back to you some time or other and hits you in the opposite reaction. Every action is followed by equal and opposite reaction; this is a simple law of physics.

This is true of all. *Artha* – this motivation says that it is alright for you to earn money. It's alright for you to earn money, but whatever the scriptures and others may say concerning how this should be done, again it's difficult to prevent perversion. I can always introduce some rationalization to say why this kind of earning is right. Again, it leaves the taste for wealth, the taste for prestige, acquisition, possession; it creates a habit in me, and it also brings about a reaction externally.

Kāma, pursuit of pleasure, we all know that. It needs no explanation at all: the more the merrier, the more the merrier, till the whole thing breaks down and says bye-bye. Śankarācārya as a very young and dynamic swami once sang a beautiful song wherein a young man enjoyed himself, and inevitably he grew old. Even though he walks on three legs, stoops, the desire doesn't seem to grow old, it's still vital.

He still longs for the old sensual pleasures that he had. And he sits there at the lakeside and dreams of those good old days. I cannot do anything physically, so I go on chewing the words and dreaming of them.

All these three are said to be valid goals of life, because one sees that these are inevitable. They who divided society into these four sections and stipulated rules and regulations to govern all these, thought it fit to point out that it is alright to have *artha*, wealth, it's alright to pursue pleasure as long they are within *dharma* and *mokṣa*, as a stream, as a river, built in between two strong banks.

One day, you must drop all things and go away. It's possible that one of these days you and I might wake up to realize: „My God, this is finished. I've been hunting for wealth, I've been hunting for pleasure. It doesn't seem to satisfy, and it doesn't seem to be lasting." This was the hope: that one day, the pull towards the center may be strong enough, like nightfall, and that we might collapse into the center and look for liberation. They were, in a way, great optimists.

As students of yoga, if we are sincerely in the fourth aspect of it, which is liberation, freedom, we are really and seriously concerned with the *vāsanā*-part of it, not so much with the *saṃskāra*-part of it, not so much with the reaction. We don't care what the reaction is going to be because once the bullet has left the barrel, it's going to be there. We are going to get the reaction one day or the other, now, maybe sometime later, maybe even in the next, subsequent births. That's not important. But what about the impression left in me now, by the action, by the motivated action, by the selfish motivated action, ego-motivated action, and how must I deal with that? That is the main concern of the yogi.

3 The Empty Begging-Bowl

The spiral whirls and the external motivation, or the externalizing motivation, continues to operate, and there is a pull towards the center. That is action, motivated action. This motivated action gives the spiral a personality. The classification of *karma* in the popular sense of *destiny*, in the sense of *fate*, is based on this factor.

Action or motion is inherent in consciousness because energy has to move, energy is motion, and the natural motion of energy creates no problem. Cold water is cold, icy, freezing; the icy coldness being inherent to the water, it doesn't shiver. A natural, unidirectional movement is no movement, and a natural unidirectional movement is a circle, not a spiral. It is when there are two powerful attractions that a motion misses the starting point and becomes a spiral.

The spiral has two points of attraction: I am this and I want that. If I am this and I'm quite satisfied in this, that motion is circular motion, it's perfectly alright. That may be called a *natural vibration* of the whole of the cosmos, and there is no problem at all with it. But somehow, somewhere, something happens. Even the inquiry commences after this thing has happened. „What is the meaning of life?" we ask only after life has commenced. „Why was I born?" we ask only after we were born. If we were allowed to ask that question before, we'd probably refuse to be born.

It's only after the spiral formation that we begin to ask: „Why did it at all become a spiral and not content to be a circle?" I do not ask this question before I got into the mess. And so, part of it is speculation. Perhaps if we dare venture into this speculation, we may see some light of how to get away from it. As I said before, to realize the real, we first have to know that the unreal is unreal. If we do not have the courage to see the unreal to be unreal, we are not qualified to see the real as the real.

Any motion in the universe can be a circle or can be a spiral. The *Bhagavad Gītā* tells us that there is this cosmic energy vibrating everywhere throughout the universe, throughout the cosmos. As this vibration goes on, collision and fusion take place in infinite number of points in the cosmos that produce diverse elements, all within that single cosmic consciousness energy.

That single cosmic conscious energy is known as *God* or *īśvara*. It doesn't matter what you call it; you don't have to call it at all. You have to call only when something or someone is absent or absent-minded! That which is everywhere, that which is conscious, you don't have to call it. It is there without your calling.

> *Bhūmir āpo 'nalo vāyuḥ khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca*
> *ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā*
>
> *apareyam itas tv anyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām*
> *jīva-bhūtāṁ mahā-bāhoyayedaṁ dhāryate jagat* (*BhG* 7.4-5).

Nine factors are enumerated here. We'll keep one in reserve and deal with the eight. Earth, water, fire, air, space – these are the five elements we have been discussing at length. Together with the mind, with

intelligence and ego-sense, they constitute the inferior divine nature. *Aparā* and *parām* do not necessarily mean *inferior* and *superior*, but they are usually translated that way. Once you come to see the point, perhaps you will find your own translation. Perhaps it means *outer* and *internal* or *material* and *spiritual*; I prefer the last.

Earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intelligence, and the ego-sense, these are the material part of cosmic nature, *aparā.* Strangely enough, Kṛṣṇa lumps what is called the ego-sense also into this group of outer, material nature of the cosmic consciousness. What is the ego-sense? The eyes see, the ear hears, the tongue tastes, the skin touches, the nose smells – what is this ego-sense there?

Ego-sense in this context is perhaps like a begging-bowl, merely collecting things, synchronizing, synthesizing, putting all these things together, so that the eye sees that gadget, the ear hears the sound that that gadget produces. All these things have to be put together somewhere in order that this intelligence may understand it, may see that the sound comes from the same object which the eyes see, that these are not two completely different and distinct things.

One has to tread very softly here, without rush. You know the famous saying: „Even angels fear to tread there.“ It's a collection-box, it's a begging-bowl which collects all these bits and pieces, collects all the sensations. But this strange begging-bowl, this ego-sense, seems to be able to overstep its own begging-bowlness. Your dinner plate does not jump up and say: „Ah, the soup is very nice!" But the ego-sense says so. Whereas in reality, it is the consciousness, the intelligence that experiences these stimuli, the ego-sense says: „I see it! Oh, she's nice, she's beautiful", and that goes on.

This, what my guru Swami Sivananda called *self-arrogating nature*, is the problem. The ego-sense according to Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad Gītā* has a valid job to do. It has its own role to play and therefore perhaps the word *ahaṃkāra* used in the *Bhagavad Gītā* is peculiar to itself, not the ego-sense which is declared to be unreal, fictitious in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* and so on. Here, the ego-sense is a mere collection post, a lounge in the airport, where all these things are put together.

But somehow this ego-sense is able to say: „I see this, I taste this, I hear this". It is not the I that sees it, it merely collects it for the intelligence to experience, the real experiencer being the same cosmic consciousness. The ego-sense is not unreal, the consciousness which experiences all this is not unreal, the bowl is not unreal, the taste of the food is not unreal, but mysteriously, the bowl is able to say that „the soup is nice". That is the unreality. In our case, the ego-sense itself says: „I experience". That is the only unreality.

If that is seen as unreal, then the whole picture becomes clear. Earth, water, fire, air and space, intelligence, mind, the whole thing is there, millions of *ahaṃkāra*s, millions of spirals are there in the universe, the experiencer in all cases being the one consciousness. There's no problem. There are billions and billions of trees, billions and billions of blades of grass, all of them springing from the same earth, all of them growing differently. All these millions of spirals are springing up, existing in cosmic consciousness as manifestations of this cosmic energy, and as such there is no problem at all, no difficulty.

But there is some mystery which they call *māyā. Māyā* means *I don't know*. It's also called *avidyā*. *Avidyā* means I have no idea, that's all the same as in English. What in English was pronounced *I have no idea* was condensed into *avidyā* in Sanskrit. It sounds similar! How does the bowl say: „This soup is nice"? I have no idea; that is foolishness.

Now we must abandon this spiral and go back to another spiral which is a hurricane. What does the personality consist of? Whirling wind. Wind is everywhere; it is not as though the wind was only there in the tornado or in the hurricane. Wind is moving everywhere; motion is the nature of wind. But when that motion assumes the character of a personality with the self-arrogating ego-sense, it creates trouble.

How does this happen? The wind seems to whirl around. Around what? Around nothing. The meteorologists call it the *eye* of a tornado or of a hurricane. Funny that there is the word *I* again! It is spelled differently – never mind: That whirlwind also has got an I. Perhaps if it could talk to you, it would say: „I'm coming! Beware, I'll hit you!"

What is it? It's a piece of nothing. And yet it can destroy a whole village, flatten a whole city. Wind, which is life-giving, which is everywhere, suddenly begins to move haphazardly, in a disorderly fashion or in an orderly fashion in relation to the eye of the cyclone or the hurricane. The whole thing assumes a personality that lasts as long as the pressure lasts.

That gives it a distinct personality, a distinct character. Two or three years ago when I was here, there was a hurricane on the East Coast. The newspaper gave a rather graphic account, making us feel that this thing was a demon. It was coming from Florida, traveling up, without ticket, without passports, just like some of those ghosts and evil spirits mentioned in our scriptures.

There is the I which is nothing, but somehow this I is able to gather this whirlwind around it. The wind was there, but on account of this fictitious coming into being of the I, the self-arrogatingness of the ego-sense, a personality is built. From thereon, a motivation arises: this personality gives rise to a motivation.

When the wind blew, it was calm, it was gentle, it gained force, nothing serious. But now that there is a fictitious I, the eye of the hurricane, the same wind assumes a personality and whirls round that I. It whirls round that I, it doesn't go about doing its normal job, it does an abnormal job around a piece of nothing. Till – we'll conclude this analogy – till somehow or other, the pressure in the eye of the cyclone or the hurricane is lost, and then …

Wind remains wind, the wind is not destroyed. Wind remains wind, space remains space, nothing has happened. You look around and see: the same wind, the same space and the same elements. What was assumed to be the eye of the hurricane is gone. What went, what disappeared, what dissipated? Just the idea that there was a terrible thing, only that went. The wind has not been destroyed, it's still there. The space is not destroyed, it's still there, everything is still there. But somehow, mysteriously, the whole thing disappeared. That's called *motion*.

Earth, water, fire, air, space, they're all there everywhere. Intelligence is also cosmic and therefore each particle of that intelligence, each atom of that intelligence is also in contact with all these forces:

jīva-bhūtāṁ mahā-bāho
yayedaṁ dhāryate jagat (*BhG* 7.5).

The inner experiencer of those eight components of outer nature is the *jīva*, is the living soul. What is the soul? Don't imagine it as a sort of flame coming up. The soul is nothing but a cell, a cell in the cosmic being. And there are infinite number of these cells, countless, infinite number of these cells throughout the universe. This coming-together of the outer nature of this cosmic being, which is material, and the inner nature of this cosmic being, which is the cell, happens in an infinite number of points.

Each cell becomes the experiencer, and that cell is surrounded as it were by this material nature, which becomes its own objective experience, whirling and whirling in billions and billions of places. The inner experiencer is the soul, which is a cell of the cosmic being, non-different from the cosmic being. This cell in the cosmic being, which is called *the soul*, the inner nature, is a cell in the cosmic body of God or the cosmic consciousness. It is this that experiences all experiences, being consciousness, being intelligence.

And yet mysteriously the ego-sense says: „I experience". When thus a self-arrogatingness of the ego appears, it creates a little whirlwind around itself. A tornado can lift cars, houses and people up, but it lasts only for a little while and that may not be an adequate analogy. If you transpose the analogy: the habit of the ego-sense becomes a computer. The center is still empty – we shall never forget that: the center, the eye of the cyclone is still pure emptiness, there is nothing in it. Unfortunately, the self-arrogatingness of the ego-sense has come into being. How it came into being, we do not know. But around that is the whirling wind which is like a computer.

The computer, as it continues to whirl, gathers data, all the experiences which would otherwise merely have passed through. If you look at these trees, that's what they teach: summer comes, fall, winter, spring, all those experiences pass through them without leaving any mark. But you and I are constantly worried, sometimes happy, elated: „Oh, look at these things growing on top of my head, oh, ain't I charming!" Suddenly all these things fall away. It just falls, nothing to be worried about, but then I moan: „Falling – !" That is the self-arrogatingness of the ego-sense. The computer is gathering data and preserving them, recording them, preserving them.

That is known as *citta*. This *citta* is born out of a confusion. The self-arrogating principle regards a certain field of consciousness around it as its own private property, whereas no such thing really exists. There is nothing called *my* mind, there is nothing called *my* intelligence, the *my* itself being like the eye of the cyclone: inexistent. There is not a thing called *my mind*.

There's a beautiful analogy used in most scriptures: a barren woman's son. If we are talking about which girl the son of the barren woman is going to get married to, it's an absurd thing quite from the beginning. We have not inquired into the reality of the I, the eye of the tornado. Because we see the tornado as a fact of existence, we assume that it has an I and we speak about the I, thereby

perpetuating a myth, a fiction. When the I itself is absent, how does the I then acquire a thing called *my mind*?

This *my mind* is the *citta*. Once this is assumed, that is comparable to a computer. It goes on gathering, whereas otherwise these experiences would come and go. There is some momentary experience which the soul, *jīva*, experiences, which in other words, the cosmic consciousness experiences, like the tree experiencing: a moment's delight comes, and it's gone, a moment's pain comes, it's gone. But that computer registers all that in memory, in memory banks.

Every time the *saṃskāra* or the habit or tendency is expressed, it cuts out a deeper groove in that computer. The *citta* therefore continues to operate as a personality, gathering around itself matter suited to its own functioning. Matter in the sense of earth, water, fire, flesh, bones, cheek, eyes, nose, hair – all these things are acquired, assembled by the computer to suit its own experiences and expressions, because once the computer has been fed with all these, it craves for repetition. It`s switch is constantly on, so that which has been fed into it is coming out all the time as expression, as it is a living computer.

To enable it to continue to function as an individual, it lives acquiring newer and newer bodies. It is this that takes birth again and again. It leaves one body when that body is considered to be useless to itself and jumps into another. That's the only difference between the ordinary computer and this computer: it creates its own environment, it creates its own office.

These experiences which are fed into the computer later produce their own reaction. It is usual to say: „As you sow, so you reap"; when you plant a certain seed in the garden, that particular seed gives out a particular shoot. It may not be all that simple in the case of the *citta*, because that *citta* is conscious, it is full of energy, it's churning all the time, and as and when a new experience is fed into it, new data is fed into it, the churning assimilates it; it's always fresh.

Most of you who studied English grammar may not be able to remember all the rules that you learned at school. You don't know why you use a certain word in a certain sentence, but you use it, the rules have become integrated in the whole knowledge. This is what creates a personality. And this personality continues to live, what we loosely say *birth after birth*. It is not as though it takes birth after birth, that, in other words, it dies again and again. It doesn't die at all.

If someone asks you: „Do you believe that there is life after death?", you can boldly say: „No. I don't believe that there is life after death. I believe I don't die at all!". That's different: „I don't die at all" or „this personality does not disintegrate, does not die, does not perish". The body is discarded, thrown away, but this computer goes looking for another set of molecules with which to build another house for itself, another office for itself in which it can express and experience whatever it needs to experience, whatever it needs to express.

All the actions or the subtle impressions of the action or the subtle residues of the actions that are thus stored in the computer are called *sañcita*. *Sañcita* literally means *collection*. And this collection of

actions and experiences goes looking for a suitable environment in which the reactions of those actions can be effectively worked out.

Once this choice has been made, the effects of that choice, the sequences of that choice, the consequences of this choice, have to be endured, carried out, become inevitable. And that becomes *prārabdha. Prārabdha* means the *citta* has decided that this must be done, and this must be endured, and therefore this body has been entered. That which has been allotted to this incarnation, to this birth, has to be gone through, whether you like it or not. The computer can attract to itself those conditions, events and happenings which are conducive to its present life, and that is *prārabdha*. No one can stop its functioning.

The last is *āgāmi*. That is what we are doing at present. This is the present or forward-looking *karma. Prārabdha* is what has already begun to fructify and *sañcita* is the storehouse. *Sañcita* is an enormous thing, isn't it? We don't know how much is in it. *Prārabdha* is just that little part which has become operative in this birth, and *āgāmi* is what we are doing now, what is being fed into the computer for future reference, for future torture.

That is why they do not really suggest that you and I or your *citta* and my *citta* chose to be what we are now, that that was determined by some kind of cosmic intelligence, a God or something. Otherwise, it seems illogical that people put themselves in situations in which they suffer. Why is it so? Because we have assumed something which is totally illogical, totally improbable: that there is an I. If the ego-sense itself is a mistake, a false assumption, then all these things have no meaning at all.

I read a lovely little story by Dr. Koilpillai Charles, a professor in Thunder Bay, Lakehead University who has published a little book called *The Power of Negative Thinking*. I'll give you the essence: a young man who had just become the administrator of a district witnesses a performance, some kind of play. And there a beautiful girl sails on the stage, and he's enamored. But then he's a VIP in the district and she is a professional dancer, a non-person. He doesn't want to make himself a fool by jumping up and proposing to her. He swallows all the feeling that's coming up. He goes home, has a temperature for a couple of days, is confined to bed. That may not be in the original story – a story is a story, why not widen it out a little more?

In the meantime, the troupe moves on, and for a few weeks he is still dreaming of that girl and then forgets her more and less. He gets married and raises a family. About ten years later, he comes to know that the same troupe is visiting the district. He goes to see the play, butterflies within.

He looks for his girl, she's not there. Now he had become an established administrator so that he doesn't have to bother about his reputation anymore. When the play is over and the manager comes to thank him for gracing the occasion, very casually he asks: „What happened to this nice little girl who played the hero in those days?" „Ah, oh, soon after we left the place, he had smallpox and passed away."

Now, change the story in your own mind. This young administrator was so taken up by this girl, he jumps up and says: „Right here!" He says: „Sorry my friend, I'm not a girl …" The bubble would have been

pricked then and there and the whole thing would have disappeared. That is what self-knowledge does to you: the moment I come to grips with the fact, with the truth, the feeling is not there, the emotion is not there.

You may still act, you may react, apparently moved by some emotion. But that foolish feeling that we were referring to is not there. When you hit me with this iron bar, I may stop you. I may twist your arm and push you away, then I go and have my injury addressed, that's a different story. But the feeling of psychological hurt and the hostility and grudge I bear – all that is gone. All that is fiction. The only fact is that he got up and hit me, the rest of it is fiction.

Judgment, hope, despair, fear, anticipation – all that belongs to that central fictitious element, called the self-arrogating ego-sense, arrogating in the sense of assuming. That works only on assumptions! The me that entertains all the hopes for the future, fear, hope, despair, expectation, disappointment functions totally in terms of fiction, non-existent unrealities. It has no use at all for the truth or the reality.

That's the whole yoga. In *haṭha* yoga we discussed that there is this intelligence which is beyond the me. Here again in *karma* yoga we come face to face with it: The me is not there.

The ego-sense is the mere coordinator of physical as well as psychological data, but the self-arrogating me is non-existent. The self-arrogating me is neither the experiencer nor the doer, the doer and the experiencer being the intelligence or the cosmic consciousness, the *jīva* which is one with the cosmic consciousness.

4 The Balance Restoring Itself

Now we look into the orthodox doctrine concerning this *karma.* As we go on, I hope in your mind something will be asking: „If all that is happening, how do I get involved in this? What is the me that links me with all this?" What is the me that links this consciousness with what goes on, the expressions or the experiences, all of which are based on the concept of materiality? Because action and expression are possible only on the material plane, not on the spiritual plane. If there is one alone, in the infinite, there is neither expression nor experience to deal with itself. There is no other to be experienced, there is no other to communicate with. This question must go on because that's the one unanswerable question and insolvable puzzle.

Also, one must remember not to confuse issues. What applies to the purely spiritual plane does not apply to the physical plane; the rules are different. The fish and I, we are both living beings, and according to Darwin or Vyāsa, we were all fish once upon a time. We had gills and we breathed in a different method. Now that we are landed animals, the rules are different again. One should not confuse the one with the other.

It is essential to understand that on the physical level, on the material dimension, there are a few inviolable laws. One is the law of conservation. I have a rather crude idea of it: you cannot build a house without digging your grave. That, I guess, means a lot more than it does on the surface: all this material has come from the earth. You cannot build up without digging down. That's obvious.

That is what science calls *the law of conservation of energy*, that nothing can ever be completely destroyed. Energy keeps changing its function; static energy becomes dynamic energy, matter keeps changing its form, but it is never completely lost. Talking of the spiral becoming an individual, this law explains why, when the spiral builds up, there is a dramatic condensation in one point and there is a sort of vacuum around – *sort* of vacuum, not a complete vacuum. There is a thinning out of matter around this spiral.

The same matter still exists, but since there has been a condensation formed around that, there is a field of subtlety, of thinness. That's probably where the personality is formed. When this personality begins to act, this is what sends out impulses and just like in the case of firing a rifle, there is a backfire at the same time.

I read it somewhere that after a rifle training for soldiers, they found either in the clothes or in the bodies of the trainees lots and lots of gunpowder. Every time a man fired, something spilled on himself. It is not possible not to do it; you cannot perform any action whatsoever without leaving an impression of it in yourself – unless you are a yogi, a *karma* yogi. *Karma* yoga is that mental, psychological, or spiritual trick by which you prevent this from happening. That we should discuss later.

Normally it is not possible to perform an action without the action leaving an impression behind, *saṃskāra*, *vāsanā*. This word *vāsanā* is even more interesting, because in common parlance, this word *vāsanā* is taken to denote a scent. If you handle incense and then wash your hands with soap, they still

smell of incense, plus soap. You see nothing at all, not a particle of the incense on your hands, not a particle of the soap on your hands, but still the scent is there. That is called *vāsanā*. It is some subtle impression left which doesn't want to go away.

With every repetition it gains strength. It is not worked out, it's worked in! This is the danger of what is called *saṃskāra*s. Every action that the me performs sends out an impulse in what may be regarded as an external world from the purely material point of view. From the material point of view, I is different from you, and so an impulse is sent out and an impression is left behind. Both these together form this *sañcita karma*. The action has been done, and since the action has been performed, it has created an impulse which must return to it as reaction.

Everything in the world is a boomerang. Einstein is supposed to have said that even the universe bends around and ends in a circle. Whatever goes out of you has to come back. If you take a big rock and throw it into the lake, it immediately creates a draft. There is a build-up all around it, in a moment the water flows into the draft to fill it up; it has to do it. That is nature, it's a pure and simple law of material existence. As long as this body shares with the rest of the universe the materiality of its existence, it is subject to the same laws, the whole of it is inescapable. The action that proceeds from me returns to this personality, to the spiral. This is called *karma.*

It's also called the *law of retribution*. That makes you fear, and it is meant to evoke fear in you. Why is it so? The people who invented this expression of *retribution* were like schoolmasters. Whereas if you strip it of all this verbiage, you see that the same thing is a pure and simple law of balance, or of compensation: nature is so nicely organized that it balances itself. Everything balances itself immediately.

You cannot prevent nature from restoring the balance all the time, from moment to moment. That's what we saw when we were standing on the edge of the chair. The whole system balances itself. When he falls from the edge of the chair, it is only in your eyes and my eyes that he is falling down. In the eyes of nature, it is still restoring the balance. You may come down on your feet, your nose, your head; it doesn't matter at all. But the balance is restored. That agitation, that imbalanced state is not possible for nature to tolerate. That's all, that's the law of *karma,* nothing more.

You go on eating sweets from morning till night; when the system is saturated with sugar, then it develops diabetes. The intelligence of the body says: „Enough of sugar – see you next birth! You have exhausted your quota for this, we'll see about it next time." That's all. Quite simple it is, if you get rid of the idea of retribution from your mind and look at it as a pure balancing act that the divine intelligence and nature performs throughout the universe at all times.

All pursuit of pleasure returns to you as pain. Exploitation, accumulation – accumulation means digging your grave on the other side – it comes to you as adversity, poverty. And don't forget the backfire. Pursuit of pleasure is supposed to lead to pain. When I pursue pleasure, I want it, more and more. The very coming to an end of the experience of pleasure leaves pain behind. As I'm pursuing pleasure, I'm running away from the pain which is inevitable to life, so that itself causes pain.

Pursuit of pain is supposed to cause pleasure. That is the idea of asceticism and all this mortification. You go on hitting yourself, so that when you stop, you feel delighted. It's as simple as that. Again, the balance! It was more delightful before, but it wasn't highlighted. Now, that pleasure is highlighted.

And that is called *karma. Karma* is simple balancing, compensation. I am giving to you the word *retribution* also, but I can never reconcile myself to that belief which is very widely held. So, I'm giving you the orthodox point of view, that God punishes, though it's too silly. Because if God is omnipresent and omnipotent and omniscient and all this, and God created all of us and God sustains all of us and God can do whatever he likes with us – why must he stand up in front of me and be rolling up his sleeves? That, to me is blasphemy. It's probably again restoring the balance, like a very devoted and fond mother giving a bit of medicine to a child; not out of hate, not out of retribution, but to cleanse the body of the poison the child may have eaten.

What makes this operation of *karma* possible? That particle of consciousness, that *jīva*, that soul is somehow made to feel that this body, this personality is mine, me. That is the mysterious link: the me. It is that that makes the law of cause and effect operative.

There is a beautiful concept in Indian religion: a fairly small God, so small that you not even to feel his presence, called the Citragupta, is sitting on your right shoulder. He is observing all your thoughts, words and deeds. When you die, he takes you straight up to the court of Yama.

Yama is said to be the deity presiding over death. He is seated on his royal throne, and you are in the dock, shivering in your shoes – you do not carry your shoes there, never mind; you probably don't even have a body. Yama, the magistrate or the judge, looks at this Citragupta: „Come on, forward these accounts!" The Citragupta rattles out: „These are the liabilities and these are the assets, these are all the nice things he did, these are all he vicious things he did." He doesn't forget anything. The meaning of the word *citra* is *picture*, *gupta* is *hidden*; a *hidden picture* of all your actions. Whatever you do is registered somewhere. Psychologists call this *the unconscious*. It is mentioned in one of the *Psalms* (33:13-15, 18): God keeps all the action of all of us, so he gets a picture of it.

The word *yama* is also important. *Yama* means *restraint* or *restrainer*, *regulator*; *to terminate, to limit*; all these are implied in that word. Something built into this system which at a certain point in the course of its history says: „Enough, that'll do for the present", that is called Yama. Even so, in *rāja* yoga one of the disciplines is also called *yama*. That is: don't let all these things run away with you. It'll do. Restrain yourself, just a little bit.

To me, the very fact that a thing called *death* exists to terminate a person's life makes me believe in an intelligence called God. Nobody else could have conceived of death. If only death were not there, imagine all these crooks living forever and ever and ever – terrible! The world is a bad place already, it would be a most terrible place to live in. If I'm sure that I'm going to live on forever and ever, I don't know what I should do – a dreadful thought. So, it's marvelous that there's a thing called death in our life which is also terminating all our sufferings and pains, unhappiness. Whenever I think of this death, I think: there must be a God! There must be an intelligence which is far superior to any human person.

Yama is considered the controller, governor, the restrainer, the limiter, the regulator of life, introducing breaks into it, and this Citragupta goes and tells him. The *ṛṣi*s introduced this concept because there is a mystery which is not easy to understand nor easy to explain: this personality continues embodiment after embodiment, thus continues from one incarnation to another incarnation. In this incarnation, let's say it has been mostly vicious. It has been murdering, looting, doing terrible things, though perhaps it did also some good to somebody, maybe to his wife and children. It isn't possible for a person to be totally evil.

This personality lives in the embodiment and goes on with all this recorded somewhere, in the etheric double. What determines what his experiences in the present incarnation are going to be? If someone is to experience the reaction of all his previous actions, he's finished in three days! And yet, we are not subjected to too much of suffering; there is always a silver lining somewhere.

There is a Sanskrit story in which a king was strolling around a beach with his ministers. One of his ministers was a super-genius with psychic powers and clairvoyance. As they were walking along the beach, a big breaker washed ashore a human skull. The king picked it up, they sat down, the king put it on his lap and said to his minister: „You have got all sorts of powers, can you read what is written on his head?" In India, they say that all your fate is written on your forehead. So, he asked: „Can you read what this man's fate was while he was alive? What is written on it?" This minister turned it round and said: „Yes."

Then comes a beautiful verse, from which I know only the last bit. He was born in misery, he was born blind, he was deaf and dumb. He suffered all his life; he suffered from hunger and disease. „Eventually you'll drown and die." And the last bit is: *Kiṃcit bhogān praviśati.* That is: „There will be a little of happiness". The king was tickled, looked at the minister and said: „What, how, when? Because you said he's born blind and he's deaf and he's poor, poverty-stricken and disease-ridden and suffering, starving, and dying very young in the sea. What is considered *kiṃcit bhogān praviśati*?" The minister said: „That's quite obvious. That his skull should mount your lap, that's the only good fortune that this soul has been allotted." Isn't that marvelous?

The concept of a divine court, Yama and so on is the orthodox teaching, but it may merely be that the personality with all these impressions of past actions, stored in the mind, in the *citta*, keeps whirling around in the next embodiment, and as it keeps whirling around, it is able at appropriate moments to attract appropriate experiences, the proper experiences. That may be the Yama, that may be the Citragupta; we don't know.

Out of this *sañcita*, the soul or this personality whirls round, carrying with it the subtle impressions left by all these actions, good or evil. Another tricky question is how this *citta*, once it disconnects itself from this body, passes into the next one. There are as many theories concerning this as there are thinkers. This problem is dealt with not in a terribly detailed manner in the *Upanishads*, but there are a few theories.

There is one theory that this personality is born thrice: once it takes birth in the father, then it takes birth in the mother, and then it takes birth in the outside world. That's, I think, quite common and simple. But let's take a rather uncommon doctrine which is very interesting and beautiful, according to which the whole story of evolution is repeated at every birth. That is, when it is time for this body to be dropped, this personality drops this body and goes away.

It goes away and hangs in the cloud as part of the cloud. It has no size, no form, no shape. After a little while it falls with a raindrop onto the earth. It may be this earth, it may be the surface of some other planet. It falls and gets mixed up with the earth. The spirit that was in that water-drop enters into the earth, as it were. That means you were a mineral for a few years!

Staying there as a mineral, you enter the root of a plant and grew as a plant, as a fruit or as lettuce. That vegetable was eaten by a man, and you entered him and then became his seed. That seed was transferred to the woman, and so you were transferred from there to here. All the time you, the me, is somehow traveling through all this. Then you begin to grow. When you started growing, you were swimming like a fish! This theory of evolution says that we were all aquatic creatures once.

In India, there is a theory of God incarnating ten times. First God incarnated as a fish, then he incarnated as a tortoise, then as a pig and all sorts of things. All that happened to you in that birth! First you were a fish, and then when you were first thrown out, you were as good as a tortoise. If you ask your mother or grandmother, they will tell you that you behaved like a pig as a child, rolling around in the dirt! All the time, that computer was whirling, looking for the right opportunity to draw to itself the appropriate experience.

It is not possible for all the potentialities and the faculties that have been built into that personality to be expressed and experienced in one short lifetime. You were born with all that, but you live without all that and you die with it, carrying it over. All these potentialities may one day become fully experienced and made manifest. This is the theory: the *sañcita* is like a treasure and from it, just a little bit is allotted to each birth.

The physiological characteristics are inherited from the parents, let's say. I didn't bring the body from my last birth. But then, it was because of a psychological or a spiritual disposition built into the me that it chose those parents. If I had to suffer from rheumatism, for instance, I chose as parents they who have this trouble, so that it is easy for me, I don't have to go and acquire rheumatism afresh, it's there already.

That's why I suggested right at the beginning, always, all through, ask yourself: „What is this me that is involved in all this?" That the body was born of so-and-so parents who transmitted some genetic problems: what has I to do with this? Why does the me come into the picture at all?

All the theories come from somebody's mind. I don't think it is possible to evolve a dogma out of it, as nobody knows. Since consciousness is consciousness and matter is matter, the linking is unreal. When you see this unreality of the linking of consciousness with matter, then the rest is mere theory. Why not issue a few more theories?

That part of the *karma* which has been appropriated for this embodiment is determined when the baby acquires an identity for itself, when the *jīva* identifies itself with that particular embodiment. Once that decision is made on the material plane, that decision becomes inviolable: you are born with that *karma.* And that is called *prārabdha*, a *karma* that has begun. What has begun, has to be gone through. *Sañcita* is what is still dormant and I'm beginning to feel that it's not as if this *sañcita* is hanging around in the clouds somewhere there. It may be all in your own brain, un-awakened and dormant. Possibly that is the reason why the yogis are said to be capable of working out all their *sañcita* also by activating all these dormant inner faculties.

It is the consciousness that is experiencing all this, and it is the ego, the mind, and the body that function here. All the functioning is done by the ego, the mind, and the body, and all experiences belong to the consciousness. Without the consciousness, no experience is possible. But then suddenly this me jumps up and says: „I am doing this, and I am experiencing this". As long as this me is there, every action that is performed leaves an impression and creates an impulse. And this is a fresh thing; it keeps it all going.

What is the use of all this? When I'm subjected to pain or adversity or misfortune, which includes dishonor and disrespect, I can look at it with equanimity, preferably knowing, but at least assuming that I must need this in order that some imbalance in me may be restored to balance. When I am subjected to misfortune, pain, suffering, I'm looking within rather than outside. I cease blaming other people for my misfortunes and my suffering. When I cease blaming others, I cease judging others and hating others. To me, that's a very good thing. I don't need anything more.

I have a feeling also that the famous saying of Jesus on the cross: „Father, forgive them, they don't know what they do" (*Luke* 23:34) was referring to this: nobody needs to be blamed for what is happening; it is my *karma.*

One who understands this can live an enlightened and wise life. When I see that this may merely be settling a past account, balancing, then I do not react. If I do not accept, then I start with you fighting now, creating a fresh *karma, āgāmi karma.* Therefore, it promotes peace of mind, harmony, and preserves harmony in society, and eventually it turns our gaze, our vision, our attention within ourselves to try to see what it is that performs actions in life and what it is that experiences pain, pleasure.

5 The Choice to Lead a Simple Life

Do we have free will, do we have a choice? The first part of this discussion may be unorthodox, then we will come back to the orthodox.

No, I has no free will, no freedom of choice. The verb is important: I *has* no free will. Though I said that this is unorthodox, everybody agrees: we have no freedom to choose what sort of experience we will have. That is the reaction to past *karma* we have. Over that we have no choice.

Most Oriental metaphysicians, however, think that you have a freedom of present action. Ramana Maharshi went one step further and said that even that we do not have. You are conditioned so heavily by your own *saṃskāra*s and *vāsanā*s, even that is predetermined. But there is one choice, and that is which way you face. We will come back to that. So, we have one famous yogi or sage who supports us in this, that we have no freedom of will at all.

One more point in that connection before we proceed: the concept that we have no freedom of choice frightens most people, because then the whole thing is kept going unceasingly. I insult you, you hit me, I hit you back and since neither of us has the will or choice to stop it, it will go on forever! This was the problem that the orthodox metaphysicians faced. Unless you admit that there is a freedom of will and freedom of choice at one stage, this silly thing is not going to stop.

Those of Ramana Maharshi's school of thought said: „So what! A block of ice floats in a glass of whiskey. Why do you get excited?" When rice cooks on the stove it's boiling, but you don't have to boil, unless you foolishly identify yourself with that rice – the me again. It is the me that tackles you into a situation in which what is happening to this is assumed to be happening to me. The me that does not exist assumes that what is happening to the body and the environment is happening to me.

That is their theory. Let this world go on eternally, unceasingly, let all these earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and then rain and storm and wars and pestilence go on, what have you to do with all that? This infinite consciousness, is it ever affected by all this? The infinite consciousness is not affected, but the me is affected. Since these people deny the very existence of the me, there is no problem for them.

Is there free will and is there freedom of choice or not? Yes, there is freedom of choice. But to whom? To that consciousness deep within, that being the sole consciousness, the sole reality. That infinite consciousness which threw up a thing which you call *earth*, a thing which you call *water*, that has freedom of choice; that being the doer of everything, that being the experiencer of everything, that has absolute freedom of choice, total freedom of action, total freedom, not bound by anything! Is there free will? *That* has free will, not I. I has no free will.

We suggested that when this infinite consciousness, which like air is everywhere, condenses into a personality, the density in the personality increases as it were, and the field of action, the field of transparency around it, weakens. Therefore, this personality is unable to perceive something beyond, and therefore, the me is formed.

Perhaps one little example might help, but please, use it only for a limited purpose: if we sit inside in the early evening, the whole room lighted up with flood lamps, you won't be able to see outside. The outside is not dark, the light becomes dim outside because of the excess of light in the room. There is a condensation of the cosmic material to form the personality and around it, the light becomes dim. You cannot see beyond that and therefore, all this is me.

There is some kind of tennis with a ball hanging on a pole which is called *paddleball*. You go on hitting it, and it goes round and round. One who does that has no time to look down, he is so busy looking where the ball is going, he has no time to examine this me. You hit the ball, you have no energy or no incentive to stop and think: „But what am I doing here?" because before it, that ball is coming to hit you there.

The player does not act at all, he reacts. Once the ball has been served, you're not acting, you are not doing anything, you are merely reacting to what the other person does. In this constant rush of reaction, there is no free will at all. You act, blindly, foolishly or wisely, in strict accordance with your own mental conditioning. Whatever habit was formed, it is that habit that goes on acting.

If that fellow playing this ball had the time to look down, contemplate, meditate, examine his life, he might discover that there is free choice on the level of consciousness, but he doesn't. And as long as one does not turn towards the reality, face the reality, one does not have a choice. Only when one dares to turn in and examine oneself, only then a choice is made. It was Ramana Maharshi's theory also that everyone has this much of choice. You can give up; you can stop playing the game and look within. That is possible.

Now we come back to the orthodox, the official doctrine. The sages and the yogis saw the endlessness of game-playing and how a reaction follows action. Action is inevitable in this world, and as long as there is action, reaction is inevitable; those were the two imperatives they saw. Then they thought: „Not too many people will have the time and the inclination to contemplate and to discover the non-existence of the me. Let us do something whereby we may be able to better human life on earth for the individual as well as for society."

They did something marvelous and introduced a threefold way of life: *yajña*, *dāna*, and *tapas*. *Yajña* is *sacrifice*, *dāna* is *charity*, and *tapas* is *austerity*. As we go along, I'll point out how all these three are performed by that false me, false ego. Anything done in the darkness of ignorance is dark, is foolish, stupid, however glorious it may look superficially.

Let's take it from the other end: *tapas* is austerity. Perhaps these sages and the yogis perceived that under the heavy influence of the me, there is love of pleasure, pursuit of pleasure. They also saw that as long as pleasure motivates the actions of people, the action became vicious. My pleasure involves your privation: I want something, and I must take it away from somebody else, that is. I want to accumulate something, and I must deprive you of what you need.

Pleasure almost always involves domination. Domination, being oppression of some other, is aggressiveness and cruelty, and this cruelty comes back and hits you, now or later. It comes back some time or other, and it comes back when you are weak. So, they said: „Give up that pursuit of pleasure" –

the word *pursuit* is terribly important. At some time or other in our life we forgot that what they meant was pursuit of pleasure and therefore rejected pleasure itself as something terrible.

Everywhere in these texts on which the whole doctrine is based, there is a very beautiful statement which is persistently ignored by us: the intelligence that is built into this body responds – not reacts – to pleasure and pain. There is a natural painful sensation and there is a natural pleasant sensation. All living beings respond to neurological sensation, like poles attracted, like magnetism: turn two pieces of magnet with the positive poles facing each other, they kick apart; turn one of it the other way, they jump close together. There is no love, there is no hate. Love and hate are born of your own mental conditioning, psychological conditioning.

These scriptures insist that there is this inherent experience of pleasure, inherent experience of pain built into every living organism. That you don't need neither accept nor reject; it is there. But when does one pursue pleasure? When the experience of pleasure leaves an impression on your mind and the mind begins to crave for it when the pleasure is not there. That is what they call *pursuit of pleasure*, or Buddha called it *taṇhā*, which is *craving*, craving for pleasure.

Nobody objected to your experiencing pleasure; it is there, in spite of you. But what was discouraged was the pursuit of pleasure. The pleasurable experience is always momentary. You chew a piece of chocolate. It's very sweet – enjoy it! That's inevitable, right? When you put that piece if chocolate in your mouth, it tastes sweet. Leave it alone there. After a few minutes the taste has gone. „Where is the chocolate?" In the mind! See that it does not leave that *vāsanā*, that smell in your mind. Chocolate came, it went, it's gone. „Ah, I wish I could have another", that is pursuit of pleasure. No animals do that, except the domesticated ones. They enjoy when they have to enjoy and when it's over, it's over, they are very busy doing something else, like sleeping.

So, pursuit of pleasure was discouraged. But then somewhere it got out of control and people began to hate pleasure. It's another delightful pursuit, the opposite-angle pursuit, pursuit of pain. They forgot that it was the pursuit of pleasure that was the enemy but regard the pleasure itself as enemy and therefore pursue pain, exalting pain-seeking as a spiritual pursuit.

Can I overcome conditioning by creating another conditioning? She likes chocolate. She can revolutionize that conditioning by eating chilis. Six years later, she has got a bag full of chilis with her instead of chocolates! What has been done? Nothing! She has not overcome conditioning as such; condition cannot be overcome.

To this fellow, playing the ball game on top, without looking down at all, without looking within, the master merely suggests that instead of hitting the ball this way, which makes it come back and bang the back of your head, hit it that way, so that it doesn`t hit you where you may be hurt. That's all! We are not talking about self-realization at all, we are merely dealing with tricks that were introduced to make life as pleasant as possible. The ball is still going to come back, but when it hits you, let it not knock your brains out. The reaction is not sought to be avoided now; we will come to that later. The reaction is not

sought to be avoided at all, but the reaction is sought to be a little nobler, a little happier, a little more blessed. We are seeking good fortune, not no fortune. That is *tapas*, austerity.

I feel what *tapas* really means is a natural, extremely simple life. That I learned from Swami Sivananda. He did not indulge in all sorts of crazy forms of austerity, but led a natural simple life where there was no room for pursuit of pleasure, nor a masochistic love of pain. I have never seen a person more naturally human. I'll give you one example.

We were on the All-India Tour and there was a public demonstration of devotion to the master. In India this is a common occurrence, what is called *pāda-pūjā*. We asked the master to keep his feet in a big bowl, so we could wash his feet, chanting mantras and so on, as a devotional practice. This was at a public meeting in Baroda. In that part of India, there is a particular custom: everyone brings sandalwood-paste and daubs it on your forehead, to keep you cooler. The master accepted all that.

One by one a few devotees came and applied this sandal-paste on his forehead. Then came a middle-aged woman who was terribly excited. She started dabbing the paste, and that funny thing was running! Probably there was some kind of incense in it which ran into the master's eyes, and the eyes started burning. What would you do? Please visualize yourself sitting there, being worshipped by all these people who think that you are God. You would probably be tempted to grin and bear it: „They are full of devotion, and they expect me to bear everything calmly, so I mustn't show any pain."

Not him! I was sitting next to him: „Ha, ha, he, he! Who is it, who is it? Tell her to go away, go away! Go, go!" It's a natural reaction of the eye to burn when something irritating is being put into it. To grin and bear it is not *tapas*, is not austerity. Look within and see what is it that demands that you should keep quiet in such circumstances: your ego, the me which is frightened to lose its vanity. Somebody gave him a bowl of water; he washed his eyes, and he carried on as if nothing had happened. I've never seen a purer human being. He was utterly human with no pretensions at all, whose actions and reactions were pure, without leaving a mark, without leaving a residue, without leaving a *vāsanā*, only Swami Sivananda. No pretensions at all, no pretension in one way or the other: in that natural simple life, if you want to introduce the word *God* here, you exist as God made you and your life is as God wills it.

The next is *dāna*, charity. Here again, there was a very well-intentioned approach to this doctrine of *karma.* What comes to you unsought, prosperity that falls into your lap, as it were, is the fruit of your own past *karma.* That you are born in a wealthy family, your father and grandfather may have been great exploiters – you are not responsible for all of that. But you're not allowed to exploit unjustly:

> *anyāyenārtha sañcayān* (*BhG* 16.12).

That's the only sin. To exploit and acquire is sinful, so avoid it. But I'm born into a wealthy family because of my own past *karma,* what do I do with it? He says: „Do charity. If you do good now, it will return to you a hundredfold, thousandfold." I'm telling them that I don't want to: let me keep the million! They didn't wait till you ask that question. They said: „Now that you have it, spend it in charity so that you will eventually earn a place in heaven". A rather unhealthy motivation is introduced here. If I find out that there is no heaven, then I won't do charity either!

So, *dāna*, charity, was encouraged. While doing charity, you naturally preserve for yourself what you really need, and distribute to others what they need. Thus, your own gross selfishness is sort of thinned out and at the same time social welfare is promoted. This inevitably leads to all sorts of corruption.

The third, which is the last for us: sacrifice. I think this word is the most abused of the lot. Sacrifice I believe means to make something sacred. I really don't know how and where the word assumed the significance of something being destroyed or killed, like a lamb. The idea seems to have been that whatever I eat, whatever I consume, is sacrifice unto God, so that even these are made pure, made holy.

The Indian view of the sacrifice took a five-fold form. This is called *pañcamahāyajña. Pañca* is *five*, *mahā*: *great*, *yajña: sacrifice*. *Devayajña* or *worship of God* was done when the food that they ate was also offered in sacrifice and taken as a sacrament. You have the mass every Sunday, and you have a sacrament every Sunday. The orthodox Hindu Brahmin was supposed to do at least once a day every day. No food was eaten in our houses without this worship being performed, but all the food was being offered to God and taken as sacrifice, all the time.

Pitṛyajña or the adoration or sacrifice to the ancestors took two forms: some ritual ceremonies, and also leaving a son behind so that they are pleased that our family tree is perpetuated.

Ṛṣiyajña, sacrifice of my time and my talent to the sages, so that every day I studied the scripture and recited them and taught them to others. These three are probably a bit farfetched to most of you.

Then came *manuṣyayajña,* which is charity again. I think that is also part of the Jewish tradition, to always have one empty seat at the table, for the unknown guest. Nobody should eat without feeding an uninvited guest. It need not be a poor, it may be any traveler, any pilgrim, anybody who comes walking along the road. After the lunch had been cooked, the head of the family would go to a temple or at the riverside and see if somebody was sitting there and ask them: „Would you care to come and join us?" Imagine a whole village of about hundred houses, doing this. There should be no hunger, no starvation at all! It's a beautiful system.

The last is even more interesting. In South India, you see some sort of patterns drawn outside the houses. This is a delightful tradition that somehow got out of control again. Early in the morning, the lady of the house was supposed to take a handful of grains and throw it outside for the insects to eat, so that they may not come into the house. Then they thought that instead of just throwing those grains, why not make them a nice pattern? Now it has become a fine art. They don't use rice powder anymore, they use chemical powder! The original purpose is lost, the original ideal is lost, it is a mere artistic pattern.

After the *pūjā*, after the ceremony, before we ate, we were also supposed to throw a ball of food on the roof, for the birds to eat. None of these things was purely unselfish, though they were wrongly painted as absolutely unselfish. I believe that especially the crow would not touch the food if there was something poisonous in it. So, it's a sort of self-protection: you throw it and wait till the crow eats it, so it's alright to eat for you, too.

After the meal was over, again we were supposed to feed the cows and so on whatever was left. Nothing was allowed to be preserved, refrigerators were disallowed, let alone didn't exist, because in the *Gītā* you find:

yāta-yāmaṁ gata-rasaṁ (17.10).

One is not allowed to eat food which had been preserved for more than three hours. It is de-vitaminized and de-natured food. In our household, our old women wouldn't even eat pickles, as they were preserved. We were given pickles, we liked it, but they wouldn't touch it.

In all this, it is possible to learn to see that you don't need all this, and by sharing with someone else what you have, you are really adding to the quantity of happiness and joy in the world, thereby increasing your own delight. But of course, it doesn't work so well.

Nothing works till you face the me. All the rest is only struggling. We go on imagining that I can do this, I can do that, and we try all sorts of gimmicks. You pray for something, you will something, and then, occasionally, something that you prayed for, something that you willed, happened. It's a mere coincidence. It so happened that at that time your prayer or your will synchronized or coincided with what was coming.

The *Bible* does say so, too: not even a sparrow can fall except by the will of the father (see *Matthew* 10:29). Why do I pray? Why should I not pray? So, I keep praying. But if you believe that a human person can somehow force this cosmic consciousness into throwing a few of these to suit my convenience then the possibilities are horribly limitless.

To illustrate this, there are some funny Indian legends. Someone who was considered a demon performed austerities, *tapas*, by standing on his toes with one arm up and repeating a mantra for 10,000 years. It was a prayer addressed to Śiva, and it is said that Śiva is easily pleased. 10,000 years later, Śiva stood in front of him and said: „I'm pleased with your devotion. I'll grant you any boon you choose. Ask". He chose a boon: „If I place my hand on someone's head, he must be burnt to ashes." „Okay, it's been granted." The demon said: „Come closer. I want to try it on you first." And Śiva started running! This story occurs in a scripture which glorifies Viṣṇu, not Śiva, so in the meantime, Viṣṇu had sized up the situation, he knew what had happened: Śiva was running, and this demon was pursuing him.

Viṣṇu intercepted, and assuming the form of a boy he dug a small hole in the earth and was planting a tree upside down, with the roots above and the branches below. This demon chasing Śiva happened to notice this and said: „What a foolish boy! Don't you know how to plant a tree?" „Not as foolish as you are. Hehe, you trusted that Śiva!" „I got this boon from Śiva, and he seemed frightened." „Ha, he bluffed you." „How do you know that he bluffed me?" „If you don't believe it, put your hand on your head!" This exchange was so hypnotizingly fast that he said: „Yes." And he got burnt!

So, if anyone has the power to influence these cosmic forces, that is what is called a *demon*. A demon is not somebody who has 24 feet and four noses, a demon is one who meddles with the cosmic forces. That's not given to them. You may call it *karma* yoga, you can call it *bhakti* yoga, you may call it what

you like, it is only when this, the false me, the non-existent me is realized to be non-existent, that there is self-surrender or self-sacrifice. Then you are considered a saint who is able to do some marvelous things, which means: it is not you that does it.

I heard it from the lips of Swami Sivananda a million times; people who come and say: „You blessed me, and I got what I wanted". He would say: „Not me, God does it." There is no me at all here! It is God's own power that does it. If your life has been transformed by going to him, it was God who did it. I never even heard him say that „God made me his instrument to do this", no, it's God who does it. The me does not exist even as an instrument. He is not there at all, it is God that does it. That's a saintly person.

6 Breaking the Inexistent Shell

Orthodox religious people regarded *yajña*, *dāna*, and *tapas* as essential for attaining *mokṣa*. They found that activity was inevitable, since life is motion and motion is activity, and that activity naturally tended towards pursuit of pleasure: once I taste pleasure, I want more and more of it, once I taste the importance of wealth, I want more and more of it.

You cannot help experiencing pleasure, just as you cannot help experiencing pain. But when you experience pleasure, there is a hook in it which makes look for a repetition of that pleasure, and then, in that ball game you forget what's happening. You pursue pleasure and avoid pain, that's the ball game that goes on all the time. In the heat of that pursuit of pleasure or wealth, power, you forget that all this has a limitation, Yama, that all this has an end.

There's a lovely little story in one of the *Upanishads* where a young man asks Yama: „What is the use of a long life and all the pleasures of the world when you, death, are still there?" What is a lifespan of 100 years or 200 years that you're frantically try to prolong? It's nothing in history. We look at this clod of earth, and that little bit of rock says: „We have been much longer here than you are!" In cosmic time, they are nothing, even in geological time, they are nothing.

If we keep the pursuit of pleasure, power, and wealth within decent bounds, it is possible for the individual life to be lived wisely, promoting the welfare of the whole community. Their aim was to promote wisdom in the individual and welfare in society. *Mokṣa*, liberation, is your business, not theirs. Therefore, they fell into a well-intentioned trap of a motivation, as any motivation is fraught with danger. You couldn't work on all planes at the same time, it's difficult. So, their job was over.

Kṛṣṇa came along and he brought about a sort of revolution in the whole concept, the whole pattern of thinking, the school of philosophy. He said that as long as the motivation is there, you cannot avoid the polarization of life into good and evil. What you consider good now and get hooked on to, itself turns evil by and by. Any motivation is wrong, but he says in the *Gītā*:

> *yajño dānaṁ tapaś caiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām* (18.5).

It's a very beautiful thought: *yajña*, *dāna*, and *tapas*, these three that we have discussed, are good, good in themselves. Therefore, they do not need a motivation.

> *Etāny api tu karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā phalāni ca*
> *kartavyānīti me pārtha niścitaṁ matam uttamam* (18.5).

These three must be rigorously practiced by everyone, but without motivation, without attachment. *Saṅgaṁ* means *contact*. Practice all this without contact – the official translation is *attachment* – and without motivation, without expectation of a reward, without expectation of a result, without hope. Can sacrifice, charity and *tapas* become your nature, so that they need no motivation at all?

What is freedom, what is non-attachment? If you translate literally, without regard to grammar or syntax, *saṅgaṁ tyaktvā* means *abandoning contact*. To do that, I must examine what this contact

means. Contact presupposes a division and as long as the division is there, there must be contact. I can run away from you, but I cannot run away from you unless I contact something else. You're dangling from a tree, and you will continue to hold on to that branch till your foot hits the ground. You cannot hang in mid-space all the time. When you step off the chair, the foot must be in contact with something, otherwise – it comes in contact with something else immediately.

You jump off the chair and you come to land on the ground. You let something go and you are catching something else. This is what happens to most of these wonderful people called *saṃnyāsin*s: „My home, my wife and children – that's attachment, I don't want them!" Go away, and what do you do? You cannot exist in a vacuum, so you gravitate towards somebody else and call that a *spiritual relation* – how marvelous! You can run away from home; that is very easy, and everybody is running away from home, today, tomorrow, or a little later, if not in pursuit of a mate or a job or something else, in pursuit of death. You're not permanently at home, not forever. If you don't kick your home out, your home kicks you out.

Detaching oneself from something else is a tricky affair. I cannot live in a vacuum. So, what does *non-attachment*, *detachment*, mean? Do I pull away from something? That is where the trouble started. When I became an island to myself, in myself, as myself, and a division was created, it is then that attachment begins. Division and contact are two sides of the same coin! As long as there is division, there will be contact.

Freedom from attachment means freedom from division. Avoidance from contact means the realization that you and I are one. It may be a funny way of looking at it: I'm not afraid of contact with you because I see there is no division at all, there has never been a division, not merely with you but with anybody else.

How does contact arise when you realize that, in theological language, God is omnipresent, or in metaphysical or *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* language, cosmic consciousness alone exists? If one alone exists, how does contact arise in it? Everything is in contact with everything else or there is only one.

In that one, in that ocean of cosmic consciousness, a concept arises. There is a movement of *prāṇa*. It's all one, there is no real division. In that cosmic consciousness there is a movement of energy, and that forms a spiral and as that spiral gets formed, there is a greater density of energy there, and therefore the density of consciousness around that spiral becomes low.

The low density of consciousness is called *ignorance*. In physics, too, darkness is low density of light. They say absolute darkness is almost impossible to find, that there is some light even in what we call pitch darkness. The cat is able to see, the owl is able to see, which means there is some light in it. Low density of light is darkness and low density of consciousness is ignorance.

The next statement may be a bit more puzzling: which means in truth and fact that this cosmic consciousness is everywhere where there is a living entity, whether you call it a *human body* or a *dog body* or a *tree body*. Where you find an individuality, an entity, this consciousness is dense, full, so that

this human body is filled with that consciousness. But around it, there is this low-density consciousness, which is ignorance.

Do you remember the *prāṇa*-shield that surrounds the body? Outside of that, there is a shell; not a shield, but a shell, a shell of darkness, which means: low-density consciousness. In relation to the light that surrounds it, it appears to be dark.

When that low-density consciousness is interpreted as darkness, the individual personality that is caught up in it is unable to see beyond that personality itself. That's simple, isn't it? You are caught up in this room and so even though your eyes are capable of seeing far, they do not see far, because the walls obstruct your vision.

I don't know the orthodox view, as far as I am concerned, the shell itself is hell. Only again that's very mystic. There is no hell outside that shell, that limited existence. I'm limited because I cannot see I'm not limited.

This body itself is filled with cosmic consciousness. I believe there are 300 million cells in your head, a few more million around the body, and each one of those cells is more intelligent than all the scientists of the world put together. Every cell of that body is filled with the same cosmic consciousness. But unfortunately, on account of the fact that this body is enclosed in this shell of low-density consciousness, there is a concept or a notion or an idea of a limitation. That's *karma* yoga. That's all, as simple as that.

This spiral springs from this cosmic consciousness. But since it is enclosed within that shell of darkness, ignorance, it does not even realize that this movement of energy happened, happens and will continue to happen in cosmic consciousness and nowhere else. Even that is forgotten, so that that which arose in cosmic consciousness thinks that it is a small, limited, finite, little human being, or a doggy being, or a tree being.

From that point of view all these theories of evolution seem to make no sense at all. According to the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* again, the same cosmic consciousness that sits there and thinks: „I'm an enlightened young lady!" licks its foot, sitting there as dog – exactly the same cosmic consciousness, same cosmic energy with not even a degree of difference. In cosmic consciousness this individual assumes a duality and therefore it becomes individuality. It is indivisible, but it has assumed a duality, and it is called *indivi-duality*.

Having assumed this individuality, again it looks round, unable to look through that low-density consciousness, the ignorance, and life goes on, the movement of energy goes on, activity goes on, and all this activity is centered in this individuality: „I must be happy," „I must be healthy," „I must live long". Whatever I do, it's for me.

Can you for one moment forget all that and see movement of energy going through all that, in and through the shell, disregarding the low-density consciousness, disregarding the shell? Just as gamma-

rays can go through all of us without any block or hindrance, cosmic consciousness is flowing everywhere, regardless of whether it is called a *human body*, a *dog body* or a *tree body*.

Cosmic consciousness, cosmic energy, is in constant motion. As cosmic energy flows everywhere, it also flows through the apparent shell and the individuality that is enclosed in that shell. The same energy flows through, the same consciousness exists in it already. While that happens, the individual thinks: „I am doing this."

In order to say, „I am doing this", a division has to be made. Only then can contact be established with this movement of energy. That individualizing process is the division, and out of that arises the ego-sense or the doership: „I am doing this." The avoidance of these two is possible only if that low-density can somehow either be abolished or be pierced through. Either expand so much that you push through the shell or look straight into that shell and abolish it.

Yajña, *dāna*, and *tapas*: sacrifice, charity and *tapas* can be practiced intelligently when one is constantly aware of this individuality and of the fact of the existence of the shell, and of the fact that that shell does not cancel the fact of cosmic consciousness, that air, that space and consciousness, that energy exists everywhere all the time. If whatever action is done is done in that spirit, the mischief of individuality can be overcome.

In the light of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, in the light of *karma* yoga, *tapas* is the simple life. What is the simple life? Non-complicated life. And what is complicated life? A life of extremes. The man who pursues wealth and power falls into one extreme, indulges himself in pleasure, in power, in wealth. The man who pursues the other extreme of self-denial also indulges himself, the first man's goal being wealth, the second's man's goal being asceticism. Both are working for a goal and therefore they are indulging themselves. One man becomes famous for his wealth, he's a multi-millionaire, and the other man is famous for his poverty, as a man who wants nothing. What is common to them is obvious: he wants millions, and he wants nothing, both want something.

A simple life is right in the middle. When you avoid both extremes, you are in effect dissolving the self. The self craves for indulgence, the self craves for importance, and the man who leads a simple life has no importance at all. You ask him: „Are you a great yogi?" He says: „No, sorry, I've got a nice, comfortable living." „Are you a millionaire?" He says: „No, I'm just a simple man." – „Okay, go." Nobody is interested in a simple man. You can have a private jet and you will be given a rousing welcome. You walk up all naked and you sleep on blocks of ice or spikes, and you will be given a rousing welcome also. But if you are just an ordinary person like us, who cares?

Avoiding extremes is avoiding all indulgence and cautiously treading the middle-path. As you go on doing this, as you go on simplifying your life, you'll discover that avoiding the extremes demands constant vigilance. You're getting maybe not even this, maybe not even that, maybe not even this, maybe not even that, and then you're stuck. At that point, that shell bursts. When you start with *neither-nor*, this *neither-nor neither-nor neither-nor* gets you closer and closer and closer to you till the shell bursts and the chicken is out.

So, if that simple life or *tapas* is practiced properly, not for the sake of advertising: „I am leading a simple life," nor for the sake of merely inwardly feeling: „Oh, I am much greater than that, I'm not an ascetic like that, I'm not an indulging person like all the other persons" – no, neither this nor that, neither this nor that, neither this nor that – then it bursts. That simple life is led totally free psychologically: without any attachment, that is without any division. This is non-attachment, *saṅgaṁ tyaktvā*, without any division at all from the totality and without any hope whatsoever.

In the same way charity. An ignorant individual wants to acquire: „Let all these things come to me." In the case of a person who is evolving towards enlightenment as it were, the movement is in the other direction. But if that movement has also the motivation of either being called a very charitable person or buying a place in heaven – it's like going to the theater, you buy a ticket, you're not giving charity! You want a comfortable seat there and you give 50 dollars. The same thing you can do if you give a big donation to an orphanage and have your photograph published in the newspaper. That's egotistical charity: Instead of giving it directly to the newspaper, you give it to the orphanage.

In the same way you can also buy, psychologically, a seat in heaven. It costs you only about 100,000 dollars. You give it to a religious organization; they may even give you a certificate, some of them do. So, there is again a motivation. As long as the motivation is there, the motivated action returns to you.

Motivated action returns to the personality. It is blocked by this me, by the shell. The motivated action does not leave the shell at all, it goes round and round within the shell. It is prevented from being, becoming, or existing as part of cosmic consciousness and movement of cosmic energy; it goes round and round within yourself, building up your computer. If there is no motivation at all, if there is no hope at all, there are no strings attached and the movement of cosmic energy becomes cosmic.

Self-sacrifice or *yajña* is the most intense questioning of the shell itself. It does not involve merely your lifestyle or your behavior, but your very idea of yourself. Self-sacrifice is not an action performed, but is the sacrifice of the notion of the personality itself. What we call *sacrificing service* is but a kind of gimmick. It's intensely associated with our idea of the self, and therefore it is absolutely useless. Self-sacrificing service is not mere martyrdom, but it is a direct and immediate understanding of the fact that the shell does not exist.

The shell was but a notion. In truth, except for the fact that there is a low-density consciousness around this personality, there is absolutely no division. When that division is sacrificed, then there is pure sacrifice where there is no attachment. There is no contact at all because there is no division.

The decisive effort at breaking away from the shell is sacrifice. When that is done, there is no motivation at all, because when the personality is to be sacrificed, when the individuality is to be sacrificed, when the limitation is to be sacrificed – what motive do you have? Nothing, because all motivation belongs to this individuality. The burning up of this individuality demands total freedom from the notion of the individuality and utter hopelessness for the individuality. It is not as though I want to become one with the cosmos, it is the understanding that the I does not exist. The shell is broken.

Then there springs up from within you an intense vigilance. That has to be experienced, it comes not from the brain, it comes from somewhere else. It blows you into a million pieces, shatters the whole thing, everything, everything, everything. All that you and I have held tremendously important, sacred and secret all go, put on their cap and get out.

7 Types of Action

Cosmic unity is truth, and whatever happens, happens because of the movement of energy in cosmic consciousness. That should not create any problem. Yet you and I find that we are continuously tormented by pain, by suffering, by disappointment.

Observing all this, the yogis and the sages realized that some error had crept in somewhere. There's some error in the way people act, and they tried to rectify that error in their own ways. They classified action. This is not a modern illness but dates to the first thinkers: the moment you see that something has gone wrong in your life, you analyze it, take all the elements of this action apart and try to see which one of these nuts and screws and bolts has stopped functioning, as if it was a sort of spare parts assembly. So, we have never looked at the totality of action.

Analysis inevitably leads to pigeon-holing, classification. As I mentioned, Kṛṣṇa does not radically deviate from tradition, but restores to it the meaning that it presumably possessed when it was not yet a tradition. When the tradition was not yet a tradition, it had a vitality, it had a significance, it had a meaning which had got lost, as Kṛṣṇa himself says:

> *sa kāleneha mahatā yogo naṣṭaḥ paraṃtapa (BhG* 4.2).

People have been talking and talking about this yoga, and the spirit has evaporated, has gone. So Kṛṣṇa says: „I'm merely re-enunciating, re-proclaiming, re-declaring the same yoga." There's nothing new, as Jesus said, as Buddha said. Kṛṣṇa uses the same terminology as the tradition.

They who were before him had said that some actions are obligatory, some are prohibited, and some are neutral, just routine action, animal action. They had given names, tags, labels for all this: *karma, vikarma* and *akarma. Karma* means *action*, *right action*, *vikarma* is *wrong action* and *akarma* is *non-action*. And so, in the *Bhagavad Gītā* he repeats this:

> *karmaṇo hy api boddhavyaṃ boddhavyaṃ ca vikarma ṇaḥ*
> *akarma ṇaś ca boddhavyaṃ gahanā karma ṇo gatiḥ* (4.17).

It's difficult, tread softly, he says. It's difficult to understand all this, though they who were before him were convinced that they knew. But what is right, what is good and evil depends on your definition, it depends on which side of the fence you are. If you are a wealthy person, your doctrine, your *dharma*, your right action proclaims: „I'm wealthy, I cannot look after all my property, so please don't steal". Instead of saying that, you say: „You'll go to hell if you steal!" That the accumulation of wealth is already stealing is ignored, that's a different story.

The hungry man outside the fence, he has no use for that commandment „thou shalt not steal"; he has nothing. His commandment is: „Thou shalt love your neighbor as thyself. So, if you have some money, please share it with me. If you have some food, treat me as yourself and give it to me. If you don't give to me, I'll compel you to perform the charity in spite of yourself, which you call *stealing*." So, what is called *right action* is right action only from the point of view of the lawmaker.

Gahanā karma ṇo gatiḥ, he says: „If you are very careful, you will see a lot more in it than what appears on the surface.“ The course of action is mysterious, it is not as simple as it looks.

*Karmaṇo hy api boddhavyaṃ boddhavyaṃ ca vikarma ṇaḥ akarma ṇaś ca boddhavyaṃ gahanā karma ṇo gatiḥ: „*You must know what to do, you must know what not to do, and you must also know what is non-action.” What must I do, what must I not do and what is beyond these?

There’s another dramatic verse:

> *karmaṇy akarma yaḥ paśyed akarma ṇi ca karma yaḥ*
> *sa buddhimān manuṣyeṣu sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarma kṛt* (4.18).

Karmaṇy akarma yaḥ paśyed: „One who sees non-action in activities and one who sees action in non-action, he’s a wise man, he’s a yogi,” he says.

If you look at the spiral, you understand that. Cosmic energy, cosmic consciousness keeps moving, motion being inherent in energy. This cosmic energy, *śakti,* all the time moving in cosmic consciousness, is the real doer of any action. But this little spiral, this little individuality assumes: „I’m doing this”; whatever passes through that particular spiral is assumed to be the action of the spiral itself, whereas it is the cosmic energy that is moving, that is acting, that is engaged in all these activities. Even though the spiral is involved in this action, it is not involved.

If you have ever been caught up in a crowd, you will understand this. I was in that once, while entering a temple. I was little, and I was caught up in a rush. I couldn’t breathe and all the others were tall. I jumped up, and when I jumped the crowd started moving, so I was jammed, and I had a free lift for about five minutes. I could not move, and I moved when the crowd moved, my feet were not touching the ground.

That’s what is happening all the time! This cosmic energy is at work, and what it brings about happens. When that cosmic energy happens to move through that, that individuality assumes: „I’m doing this”. Action is there, not here. One has to understand that the spiral is also part of cosmic consciousness. Cosmic consciousness is everywhere, only there may be differences in density.

Any action that tends towards the elimination of this ignorance is right action, and any action that confirms and perpetuates this hell is forbidden action. That’s how all these codes of ethics seem to have arisen, though they have been interpreted and re-interpreted, misinterpreted, re-misinterpreted.

But all that action is oriented to the individuality. The obligatory action and the prohibited action assume that the individuality is true, real, and the individual does perform some action, so that you have a responsibility to do the right thing and to desist from the wrong thing.

Swami Sivananda had a very beautiful way of reacting to such behavior. If you’re here and you write: „My parents are aged. Can I abandon them and come to your ashram?” he says: „No, no, no, father is God, mother is God.” On the other hand, if you’d drop them and go there: „Ah! *Mātā nāsti pitā nāsti*, there is no father, there is no mother! You are a free, independent soul, stay here”.

So, what is true to you is truth, what is true to you at that moment is the truth. To introduce something else in its place is violation of human spirit. That he would never do. This much was clear, that whatever instruction he gave you was entirely your own, your personal instruction. It was not the same soup for everybody – no! Therefore, it was extremely difficult. When he was talking to her, someone else in the audience might think: „Oh my God, it is that what I'm supposed to do. – Isn`t she not supposed to do the same thing?" Or, if you're puzzled, you ask him, and he might give the opposite instruction. The way I come out of the shell may be quite different from the way she comes out of the shell.

When that egotistic feeling drops away, then I should know that the individual is doing nothing; whatever is happening is happening in the whole cosmos. Till that time, action is classified into commandments and prohibitions: thou shalt and thou shalt not. Does it work? Sometimes it does, most often it does not. Why is it so? If I'm not mature enough to understand the spirit behind these injunctions and prohibitions, I continue to rebel. If that happens, whatever I do, society takes care of me.

If I'm vicious, I don't have to go to another hell and suffer there, society makes me suffer here itself. If I am good, society rewards me, I don't have to go to heaven. All that individualized, personalized action is within the shell, and therefore all your actions, all your heaven, your hell, your holidays, the whole lot is there within that shell, your own saviors, your demons, your Gods and your Goddesses, the whole lot is there within that personality.

The personality creates all this, the spiral creates all this around itself. Because there is cosmic consciousness in the personality also, it can create in itself a heaven and a hell, a devil and God, one who fell and one who redeems, the trinity and the quadruplet, everything. Everything is in that shell. All of them pertain to this personality, to the individuality, to this spiral which thinks that „this is what I'm doing, and this is what I'm getting". Neither of these is true from the absolute point of view.

As long as the spiral, the individual, the personality, thinks that „I'm doing this", it is also that I am subjected to this. I am doing something good and I'm getting the result. I do something evil or did something which something in me didn't approve of, which perpetuated this limitation, self-limitation, which is selfishness. Selfishness is nothing more than self-limitation: „I'm a small being". As long as I'm selfish, self-limited, all the actions that even pass through this are assumed to have sprung from me and all the reactions that naturally follow those actions are also assumed to be my experiences.

One thing is good to remind ourselves here again: no matter whether society and the world call your action *good* or *evil*, you are incapable of doing what that cosmic consciousness or cosmic energy does not make possible. Because that is the real doer; all action springs from this cosmic consciousness.

Then they divided actions into three more categories: *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. *Tamas* means *dull*, *inert*, *dark* and *rajas* means *active* as well as *impure*. *Sattva* is normally translated *light*, *luminous*, but it can also mean *of the substance*, *the essential nature of the substance, existential*.

Again, the basic principle is the same: tamasic action is pure mechanical action, automatic, involuntary in the sense of „I've no control over what I'm doing", dull, stupid. Therefore, it is not exempt from

reaction, whereas routine, automatic, mechanical action may even share the characteristics of an action which is not followed by a reaction.

Rajasic actions spring either from your brain or from emotions. Rajasic actions are smart actions, calculated, very well-calculated to achieve the intended result. It is heavily ego-oriented, selfish.

Both the rajasic and the tamasic actions are also within this shell. Only the sattvic actions are like the pecking of the chicken to break the shell. The shell is not broken, but the chicken has made a crack in the shell. How is that explained? *Sattva*, as I said, is usually translated *light*, but it also means *the essence of the body, the essence of the personality.* What is the essence of the personality? Not what you have made of it. If your thoughts and emotions were taken away from you, how would the intelligence in the body act? That is *sattva*, where the essence of my own being acts, not me as a personality, not me as an individual. It is very important to understand that clearly because at that point there is neither an expression nor a suppression.

If all motivation is removed from the body, from the individuality, from the personality, and if the automatic action and the motivated action is discarded, what remains is pure action, spontaneous action, creative action, and that creative action springs directly from the cosmic consciousness and cosmic energy, without any interference. Creative action is the action of cosmic consciousness or energy, with which you and I have nothing to do.

That is sattvic action. It is still action which passes through the individuality, the personality, and it is still action which seems to be emitted from you; to the observer you seem to be doing this. But inwardly, only you know, only the person concerned can know that this is neither an automatic action, nor a calculated action, brainwork, or the work of emotion. That's all I know!

You cannot know that this comes from cosmic consciousness – then the personality, the ego is very much alive. You only know this: „I'm not doing this mechanically". You know also that this action does not spring from my brain, from my mind, and this action does not spring from my emotional being. I'm not doing that because I like to do this, I'm not doing this because I dislike doing this; neither this nor that, neither this nor that, once again.

When this *neither nor* is taken care of completely, the me is locked in this vigilance. The intelligence that is in this personality, which is non-different from the totality, that does, that makes happen what must happen, and that is *sattva*. That sattvic action itself is self-transcendence.

8 Appropriate Action

Life is movement of cosmic energy in cosmic consciousness, which is divine will, God's grace. It is natural cosmic activity, and this is something that cannot and need not be restrained or promoted. But somehow the individual personality desires some of it and dislikes some of it. That is where the attachment arises. The attachment is not something which is contrary to the divine will; this, I think is important to remember. It's absurd to say that you and I, silly little things, mosquitos, can do something which is contrary to the divine will; it's not possible.

If the clinging to *I like this* and *I don't like this*, *I desire this* and *I hate this* is not there, there is no individual. Swami Sivananda used to say very often: „Take likes and dislikes away, there is no world and there is no egoism. Persistently deny within yourself your own likes and dislikes, then probably you don't exist." I don't have to be told to run away from something which I regard as painful. I don't have to be told to abandon someone whom I hate. Therefore, the attention is directed more towards changing my attitude towards what I like, and therefore non-attachment is preached. I need to change my attitude towards that which I dislike, hate to do.

When you try to do it, then that which hates doing that comes into sharp focus! You can see what we have so far been discussing as vanity, egotism and all the rest of it. When the whole light is focused on that hate or that craving within, it's not very difficult to proceed to the next step and see that it's a chimera, it is nothing there, it's a foolish fantasy.

Now we have two aspects of *karma* yoga: As long as this division exists within, I have to lean more towards what is considered good action. When this division in me drops away completely, then the action is absolutely motiveless. That can be called *spontaneous* action. It can be called *creative* action, and I prefer to call it *appropriate* action.

Creative action does not spring from you. What springs from you is motivated action. Even if there is a creative action which happens to take place here, it is not my action, it springs from the cosmic consciousness which, being cosmic, is here also. So, God, or this cosmic consciousness which is everywhere. throws up all this movement. The cosmic energy being inherent in cosmic consciousness moves and that movement being all the action, all that activity that has no definition at all. There is no division there between good and evil action. Therefore, that is appropriate action.

That is not possible for the individual personality or the ego. A poem flows through you. Can you, while this happens, push this ego-centric personality away and see what has happened at that consciousness level? Whereas you are singing the glory of a natural scenery, of the beautiful face of a child on account of your particular affection and love for that child, in the cosmic consciousness, that movement is pure love, not for your child – this is pure action, purest action. So, in order that we may not get hung up on these ideas and concepts, it's preferable to say: the action of the cosmic consciousness is appropriate action.

However, the ego seems to interfere. It is still not able to defy the cosmic will, God's will: „Ah, I hate this rain!" The rain is still going to pour, I am still going to get wet. It's appropriate that the clothes should get wet when they are exposed to rain. Inside I'm upset; that's all. The rest happens exactly as it should: when the clothes get wet, if there happens to be a human body inside them, the body catches cold – absolutely appropriate. When the body catches cold, it starts coughing, that's perfectly appropriate. It wants to throw all the phlegm out. When it cannot do all that effectively, it goes to bed – perfectly appropriate. But something in all this is worked up. That is a non-existent individuality. The rest of it is all appropriate, absolutely.

Till one reaches this understanding, one is caught up in the dualistic current of *I don't like to get wet, I don't like to suffer*. The body left to itself doesn't suffer at all! The body begins to shiver probably, the body gets hot probably, and if the energy in the body has been worn out by aging or by over-use, abuse, if the energy has been worn out maturely, prematurely, whatever it is, then that same energy that promoted its growth says: „Alright, it's enough for you, now wind down". Even that is appropriate!

Even what is called *disease* is an appropriate manifestation of the energy in the body. Not from the individual point of view, but from the point of view of the cosmic energy and cosmic consciousness, that's perfectly appropriate. What desires the opposite suffers. That's quite simple, isn't it?

As long as this division *I desire this* and *I hate this* continues to exist in the person, a *sādhana* known as *karma* yoga is prescribed. It's strictly not *karma* yoga, because you're still struggling. As long as you're struggling, there's no yoga inside. When you're trying to give up smoking, you're still smoking, so there's no giving up. When you give up, you have given up! When you want to give up, it means you are smoking. Face that. That's the plain truth, beyond that, it's all fiction.

So, when I am struggling to reach the state of yoga, I'm not in a state of yoga and that is called *sādhana*. *Sādhana* is a spiritual practice which has as its aim and goal *siddhi* or *perfection*. *Sādhana* is the action, *siddhi* is perfection. *Karma* yoga as a *sādhana* is aimed at dealing with this: how can the division be abolished? How can this strong desire, hate, duality, be weakened? Even if they become weakened, they become transparent, and you are able to see through them; it's not terribly difficult from there on.

Do not cling to, first, the action itself, and second, to the goal, the object you wish to achieve. When you do that, the third one comes into focus again: the I – „I am doing this".

I don't know if you have experienced this. You do something, something fantastic: write a book, paint, or build a house, build an ashram, or bake a cake – all these being something which I wanted to do. It's tremendous, it's great! You have written that book, you got it published, you worked day and night, you dripped, and ripped your shirt, and all that. And you're so eager to do this – it's tremendous, ah, good job!

For a day or two, it turned out to be nice, nice, nice! A week later you wake up one morning, look round: „Is this what I've done?! How silly I was! I was nearly going to die for this. It doesn't mean anything now. At the time I did it, it seemed to be almost my whole life. Now that it is all over, I feel cold, miserable, it doesn't mean a thing. My God, why was I such a fool?" This has been done. That's it.

At some stage or other, you look at it from just that little respectable distance, and suddenly you realize: „Why was I so excited about all this? This has been done, that's it". At some stage or other, one learns the art of seeing all this as either of no importance at all or of equal significance. One thing is as good or as bad as the other, one thing is as important or as unimportant as the other. One thing is as silly as the other.

Number two is the goal, the reward or the fruit, the result. While you are doing your job, what keeps you doing? The hope, the expectation that I am going to reach that, I am going to become a great yogi. In India, it is a very laudable pursuit that when a man becomes a swami, right from there on he looks for respectability. Otherwise, why would he want to become a swami? If you want to renounce the world, you can renounce the world in the mind, that's where it exists.

Then we are told that we should set an example. Nobody follows a good example – take it from me. A bad example, they follow! But they don't follow the bad example, they want to do what they want to do, and they are merely looking for moral support. If I see a swami smoking, well, it's not that I'm going to smoke because he smokes; I'm smoking already, I'm going to smoke in any case. But when I see the swami smoking, then I bring him as my moral support, that's all.

Then somewhere along the line I'm even told that it's important to sustain that respectability, otherwise you are going to ruin society. Respectability becomes my goal. So, I have myself worshipped to enhance this respectability, and then it goes on and snowballs. This religious life has as its only goal the promotion, the preservation of this respectability. You spend your whole life running after this respectability: I must behave in such a way that I'm respectable. You bring in all the other rationalizations around it to support it, prop it up.

Can you look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself: „What use is all this respectability?" What sense was there in it? And this applies to all goals. You must have had your own big or small goals in your life. Haven't you experienced this: as soon as you have been granted what you prayed for, it doesn't mean a thing. I worked for this, struggled for this?

Don't get attached to the action itself, let it come, let it go, and don't let your action be motivated. Engage yourself in charity, engage yourself in unselfish service. Unselfish service is extremely difficult to understand, let alone do. Again, totally unselfish service or selfless service is possible only to the enlightened person who has truly realized that the individualized self does not exist.

Till then, watch yourself and watch yourself, and see in how many ways you can detect the operation or the function or the action or the activity of the self. Whenever there is selfish activity, don't plunge yourself in some kind of austerity and say: „I don't want this". Don't jump to any conclusions! „I don't want this" is also another form of selfishness, and therefore one has to be vigilantly watchful.

In the meantime, it is possible to see some form of good action, what is called *righteous action*, as being capable of promoting this inner transparency: loving service, service especially to those from whom you don't expect any reward, reciprocity. These can all be small little bits and pieces of service. You see a

blind man standing at the crossroads, frightened that he might be run over by a car. You get hold of him, take him across the road and go. He does not know who you are, and you do not know who he is.

These are excellent methods by which one can train oneself. For what? For detecting self! These are not unselfish or selfless activities in themselves. They are called *unselfish* activities, because they lead you on to the discovery of the self.

You do something marvelous one day. Somebody was drowning in the lake, and even without taking your clothes off, you jumped into that lake, pulled that person out, and didn't even ask for his name and address, you just walked away. You've ruined your dress and you've ruined your watch. It's a marvelous piece of work, tremendously important as a *karma* yogi. Then you go home, dry yourself, look into the mirror: „Ah, nice, good job!"

You resisted the temptation of sharing this piece of *karma* yoga with others because you remember Swami Sivananda was telling you that you shouldn't boast: let your right hand not know what your left hand does. That you do remember. So, you're very quiet, and if you continue to be quiet, you are very holy. Every morning you look in the mirror, you see greater and greater glow.

Where does the glow come from? The glow comes from the inner satisfaction: „I've done a tremendous piece of good work and only the lord knows it! I've not only done this, I've resisted the temptation of telling about it to my friends or in the ashram. I'm a good person, I'm marvelous. That's it, this is *karma* yoga!" This is much more subtle than the grosser forms of selfishness and therefore, it's more difficult to overcome.

If you've been vigilant all through, it's easy to see the operation of the self where it is not complicated at all by human relationship and reciprocity. No other person is involved in this, you are alone, locked with that inner satisfaction, and there you can watch: „Aha, even at this stage, the self is still there". When one reaches that stage, it is not difficult to discover the self – *discover* in the simplest meaning of the word: uncover it and to see, to see how ugly and how stupid it is.

Therefore, such unselfish actions are prescribed: do such unselfish actions because they in themselves promote social, human welfare. Whether or not you are truly unselfish, you have done a good job. If you had not pulled that man out of the lake, he would have drowned. That's good.

If you have been vigilant, if you have been careful, you would also have noticed the action of the self or the ego in ever so many different aspects, in ever so many different disguises. The self operates not only in the gross material plane: „I've done a good job, and you must pay me", or „you must do something like that", but I also go and advertise my good action.

One form of advertisement is to ask you not to advertise my good action: „Don't tell anybody!" means: „Go and tell everybody!" As you go on doing this, you're also watching within yourself to see in how many ways this self is playing up. Eventually you see that funny satisfaction when you go to bed: „Ah, I've done a nice, nice job, and nobody knows, not even my right hand, I've pulled him out with the left hand". If you remember the shell and that all your heaven, your hell and your God and your savior and

all these are within your shell: that satisfaction itself is heaven. I don't know if there is any other heaven elsewhere.

In the same spirit, you will find in most scriptures the gospel of duty. You must do this, that is: it is externally imposed *karma* yoga *sādhana*. You are not merely encouraged to do good actions, but you are almost forced to do good action, so that their hope again is that one of these days you develop a taste for these good actions.

That is the gospel of duty: I must do this, it's my duty. If you have ever been at the other end of the stick, it's unpleasant. I have a friend in Madras, in South-India; he's also a devotee of Swami Sivananda. If some of us go to him and tell him: „Mr. So-and-so, would you please do me this favor?" „Oh, Swamiji, this is my duty, I'm duty-bound to do this!" I feel like saying: „No, please …" „It's my duty to serve you", there smells something sour of it: „Left to myself, I wouldn't do it, but it is my duty, you know".

The people who formulated this core thought that if they forced you to do this, that duty helps other people as an immediate result. Never mind whether you are cooking out of love or out of joy! Food is being cooked and the hunger of other people is appeased. That is the gospel of duty. It's not often very satisfactory, however much we may clothe over it and gloss over it and paint it in many colors. This gospel of duty is not such a pleasant thing to discuss even. Then, like a schoolboy who is made to go to school because it's his duty, goes there and makes some friends, the next stage is: „I like it, I love it". From duty you graduate to: „It gives me pleasure to go there, it gives me pleasure to do this". You do it out of love, that's slightly better.

The third stage is reached when you want to do this, and you do this not only because it's your duty, and then you realize that whether I've done it or not, the situation is still the same. You go on feeding somebody, first because you think it is your duty, and secondly you love that person, it gives you pleasure, and one day you are sick of it, you're disappointed. And then, why do you do it? All this motivation seems to be meaningless: the feeling that it's my duty to do so and the feeling that it is my pleasure to do so, all these things seem to have lost their meaning and you just do, without any motivation. Ultimately, you must reach that stage. To help us in this, in *karma* yoga we have what are known as the *bhāvana*s.

Bhāvana is very difficult to translate. It may be the inner attitude, the inner feeling, the inner knowledge. It is that that matters in *karma* yoga:

> *dūreṇa hy avaraṁ karma*
> *buddhi-yogād dhanañjaya* (*BhG* 2.49).

Mere action is far inferior to *buddhi* yoga, Kṛṣṇa says. So *bhāvana* is what takes place in your *buddhi*, the discriminating intelligence, while you're engaged in your service, in your action.

The whole life is *karma* yoga if *buddhi* is turned in the proper direction. If the *buddhi* is facing the right direction, then whatever action takes place in your life is part of *karma* yoga, without your caring about it.

9 The Spirit of Renunciation

Of the three *bhāvanā* which are essential ingredients of *karma* yoga, perhaps the foremost is *niṣkāma bhāvana. Kāma* is *desire, craving*, and *niṣkāmya bhāvana* is the *absence of desire*. Therefore, the spirit of renunciation is considered one of the vital ingredients of *karma* yoga. Renunciation is the main element in austerity or simple life, the main element in charity or sacrifice. This also has been subjected to lots and lots of misunderstandings, to much misinterpretation.

We are but body-bound beings that seem to interpret and understand everything in terms of physical action, so that if the word *renunciation* is mentioned to you, the immediate thing is: „What must I do therefore?"

The body must do something, right? So that even in the case of human relationship, „I love you" means the body must do something for it. „I hate you" – the body must do something for it. „I'm a yogi" – the body must do something, stand on my head. Ha, that's easy!

We have merely translated all spiritual truths and the spirit itself in terms of the world and the action of this body in the world. On the basis of that we saw: every action brings about its own equal and opposite reaction. One school of thought maintained that every action is subject to that principle, so that when you engaged yourself in an austere life, especially in what is known as *penance*, you are bound by that very penance to reap its reward.

There's a simple story of a wonderful boy called Dhruva (see *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.11). It is said that he was taunted by his stepmother and so he went away in the forest to perform austerities or penance. When he left, the only motivation he had was that „I must regain the affection of my father, the king, and therefore the kingdom." Eventually it is said that he saw Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa. When this lord asked him: „What do you want?" he was so awed by this vision that he couldn't answer. It is said that Nārāyaṇa replied: „You came here with the intention of regaining your rightful place in the palace, you will get it." This was one view, that whatever you did, the reward comes back to you and forces you to accept it. I have to say that I don't agree with that, but that's the story.

If you give charity, it's returned to you, in Biblical language, „tenfold, pressed down" (*Luke* 38:8), and you have no option but to accept it. But then if I do a lot of charity and all this charity is multiplied hundredfold and returned to me later, that wealth might obviously corrupt me. Rolling the whole causal chain back, why am I corrupt now? Because I am wealthy. How did I acquire all this wealth? Because I was charitable in the previous birth. You see the mischief?

So, they said: „No charity! Neither give nor take." Taking from you makes me indebted to you, so that the prehistorical Brahmin was not allowed to accept even charity. He would wander around in the fields after they had been harvested and was supposed to collect and eat any grains which had fallen on the field. In other words: depend completely on nature, don't go and dependent on anybody else in the world.

This was later amended, amended as usual, till it got out of hand. Even when you go begging, they said, sit outside, watch the smoke rising from the kitchen in the chimney. Wait for a certain period of time and go when you know all the family has had their food, so that instead of throwing it through the door, they might throw it into your begging-bowl. Never become indebted to people, because that again causes *karma.* Whatever you do brings about a reaction.

Tyājyaṁ doṣavad ity eke
karma prāhur manīṣiṇaḥ (18.3),

so says Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*. Therefore, this idea prevailed in his time. *Tyājyaṁ doṣavad*: all action must be abandoned ruthlessly, blindly, because all actions are tainted by the impurity of a reaction. Even charity was supposed to be ultimately counterproductive, and even so the acts of sacrifice or service.

One has to understand the spirit of renunciation – the spirit of renunciation, not merely the action of renunciation. The action of renunciation is easy. It was left to Kṛṣṇa to redefine:

yaṁ saṃnyāsa iti prāhur
yogaṁ taṁ viddhi pāṇḍava (*BhG* 6.2).

Saṃnyāsa or *renunciation* is pure yoga! If there is right understanding and there is this harmony within, that shell is broken and there is oneness of the spirit that itself is renunciation. We'll come back to that later.

Jñeyaḥ sa nitya-sannyāsī
yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati (5.3):

„He practices renunciation all the time who neither craves nor gives up." That spirit has to be understood. It's not what you renounce or what you do not renounce, it is the spirit that governs your life, your outlook on life that matters.

A parable is often told in yoga Vedānta literature. I modified it slightly, so it doesn't shock you. Let's say you get into a rickety old van which is more or less your own home, you have all your belongings and valuables there. As you drive along, you find an old sick man lying on the roadside and you pick him up, otherwise he would have died in a few hours' time. You load him onto the truck, and you drive along. Right in the middle of a stream, the car gets stuck. It rains, that little stream is swelling, the current is strong. Half your car is already inundated with water. What do you do? That is the question.

The first thing you don't mind abandoning is the car. It's all rickety, it's worth nothing. What you considered very valuable a little while before, you are ready to abandon. Then you pick up probably your briefcase, your valuables. This sick man is not heavy, you can carry him on your back. You try to walk away from the car and the current keeps rising fast. Stones and rocks are rolling under your feet, and you think you can't make it anymore, but you do.

You say: „Alright, never mind, I've got some money in this briefcase, let it go; I'll get some more later." One by one you are dropping all this: you dropped your car, you dropped your money, you dropped your

valuables and keep walking. You're nearly getting drowned. Then of course this man, too. You realized that both of you are not going to make it.

You escape. You have given up everything: „I have given up my motorcar, I have given up my briefcase full of money, I have given up my attachment to this old man." But I is still there. In this renunciation, who is the renouncer? I can give you a list of all that I renounce. Who is the renouncer?

Who is the renouncer? The I. And what is the nature of this I? The shell. And what does that shell renounce? Nothing. It renounced all it thought was related to itself. As we have repeatedly said, the energy of cosmic consciousness is in motion all the time, bringing all of us together, separating us, constantly.

A lovely picture is provided in many of our scriptures, of transporting logs in streams: you keep watching the logs, the timber as it floats down, suddenly two or three get together, and as they go a little downstream, they are separated and then they come together, and they are separated. This is the story of our life. We all get together at some stage, and we are separated. Heaven knows why we came together, heaven knows why we part from one another. The same is true of what we call *our possessions*. All these things come and go, and therefore that is of no consequence at all. The real question to ask oneself is: who is it who is giving up what? How does it belong to me?

There's a funny story told. In India, men used to wear a cloth that is wrapped around the waist like a towel. A good old man went to river for a bath. When he came up, something hit his shoulder. It was a walking-stick, a lovely walking-stick, with ivory knobs. He picked it up, looked round, there was nobody there. He realized that it had been coming downstream, probably someone dropped it miles away. You pick up something very valuable on the roadside; you look round, nobody claims it – you are the owner and claim the property.

He then began to admire. Afterwards we introduce all sorts of lovely doctrines: „Lord, no wonder you are called *providence*! You know that I need a stick, and look how you have provided it mysteriously and miraculously", and so on. Or you introduce this *karma*: „It must be my *karma* to own this". It was then that this towel was slipping off his waist, taken away by the current of the running water. Almost instinctively he dropped the stick and caught hold of his towel. When he did that, the walking stick starts floating down. He could have one or the other.

He came out beating his breast and crying aloud: „Oh, my walking-stick is gone!" Someone asked: „But you didn't have a walking-stick when you went to the river, did you?" – „Oh, that is right. But then I had a walking-stick and now it is gone!" Holding it in his hands for two minutes somehow produced in his mind a sense of ownership.

That is our predicament in this world. We have merely touched it for a little while and suddenly we become the owner. When the ownership itself is false, what is renunciation? What do I renounce? So that whole thing is absurd. But the problem really is: who is it that renounces? If it is the ego, what does it renounce, the ego itself being a non-entity from one point of view, or the spiral which is an unpartable part of the whole, of the totality?

I hate to use the word *part* because I have a theory that unless it can be parted, it cannot be a part. That's logical, isn't it? My arm is part of me which means you can take it away and I'll still continue. But I'm not part of myself – what does that mean? Like someone saying: „I want to occupy myself." I cannot occupy myself, I am I, how do I occupy myself? How do I part with myself? Can this spiral, can this individuality be extricated, be separated from the totality? No. If the individuality cannot at any time be separated from the totality, then it is not even right to say that it is *part* of the totality. It *is* the totality!

The real renouncer is cosmic consciousness. It has nothing to renounce either. But as long as the idea persists in you that you are an individual, separate and distinct from the totality, that foolishness can be renounced. Energy is floating down this stream of cosmic consciousness. „I have – *I* have – something to do with that", that is a stupidity that can be renounced. How does one renounce a stupidity? How does one renounce a non-existing thing?

When one becomes aware of this, of the whole truth, that itself is renunciation. Renunciation is therefore merely the renunciation of a false sense of possession. The sense of possession itself is false. If I see that clearly, there is no attachment to it, there is no clinging to it, there is no contact with it, there is no desire for it, and, please remember, there is no aversion to it.

There is a very beautiful definition in the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

> *jñeyaḥ sa nityasannyāsī*
> *yo na dveṣṭi na kāṅkṣati* (5.3).

It may merely be a poetic necessity that *dveṣṭi* came before *kāṅkṣati*, it may be mere metrical composition. But if you want to pull a meaning out of that, the *Bhagavad Gītā* says *jñeyaḥ sa nityasannyāsī*: he is to be known as an eternal renouncer, *yo na dveṣṭi*: who does not dislike – that comes first, *na kāṅkṣati*: nor desires.

It's not only a prohibition of desire, but a prohibition of what we have been calling *renunciation*. „Oh, this I don't touch!", „Ah, this I don't want!" – Alright, this you don't want. I never heard Swami Sivananda say this, never. Often, he made fun: „What do you renounce? Only that which is a nuisance to you. The rickety old car, the soaked briefcase you cannot carry any further, the old man who is a burden to you." What you renounce is what you consider burdensome, bothersome. You throw it away not because you consider it very valuable to you and then you are renouncing it. You know it will sting and hurt you, and so you throw it away.

I must return to this, so that it's not misunderstood: that is not to say that I must cling to this. I'm not throwing it away as useless, nor am I clinging to it as if it's of great value. Can I look at this life, can I look at all that is here and now, the body, the clothes, the briefcase, the rickety old car, the old man, can I look at all that now as they are, neither giving them more value than they have, nor foolishly imagining that they have no value at all? Then you're a *saṃnyāsin. Saṃnyāsa*, put negatively, means not giving to anything here more value than it inherently possesses.

Swami Sivananda came to India in 1923 after giving up his practice and so on in Malaya, where he was a doctor. In May or June 1924, he became a swami. For about a year, not more, he was a wandering mendicant. I believe he first went to Benares. He didn't speak Hindi very well till the end of his life, though he lived in North India for a considerable time. As he couldn't speak the language, he was being pushed around here and there. He went near Bombay for a little while.

He had voluntarily embraced a mendicant life: „I don't want family, I don't want any possessions, I don't want to accept any money for the work I do, I'm prepared to beg for my food and live a mendicant life". Very often we get hung, hooked onto that: „I've taken a vow!" I have never seen him take a vow and I know that he discouraged people from taking vows.

He found that it was difficult for him to beg. He didn't know how to beg; he tried it for a couple of months, but it didn't click. He was unsuited to it, or it was unsuited to him somehow. All that luxury, all that money, is not necessary, and begging is not possible.

There is a third alternative, and that is what he found. He got himself a job as a domestic servant to a postmaster. I believe that this man was officially a bachelor, though he was living with somebody, but he didn't mind at all. He was this man's domestic servant, and he wasn't concerned about his going to heaven or hell. He cooked for him, washed his clothes, and in return he was maintained. That was all he needed. He had plenty of time for whatever he wanted to do, *japa* and meditation and so on. Eventually, it was this postmaster that sent him to Rishikesh: „This place is no good for you, you go away to Rishikesh, that's the place for the swamis." As the current moves, he floated to Rishikesh.

When on the second or third day he was getting a bit worried, the swami of Swami Sivananda came and said: „I'll make you a swami, it'll be alright," so he became a swami. After living in a couple of lonely places, he went to this ashram called Swarg Ashram where in addition to food and clothing, they also provide shelter. If you are an ambulatory swami, they give you a small room where you can live. There is no guru there, you are free, the ashram exists merely to provide food and shelter to ambulatory swamis. A room was available, he occupied that room. Then – what is the quotation from the *Bible*? You cannot hide the light under a bushel. Slowly he began to attract other people, young men. They joined him, they became his disciples. He also made them swamis, otherwise they wouldn't get food there!

As these disciples grew around him, that Swarg Ashram had a regulation that every resident swami here was allowed two disciples. It's sensible, if you look at it rather dispassionately: most of the swamis were aged men who needed somebody to look after them. To them, food, clothing, shelter would also be provided. But then, Swami Sivananda had more than that quota. He had to leave that place or give up this crowd. He didn't want to give them up. When he was away on tour, there was a little bit of friction between the authorities of this Swarg Ashram and Swami Sivananda's disciples. All this was conveyed to him, and he returned from tour. It seems he merely went to the manager of the ashram and said: „I'm leaving."

It's quite simple, as simple as that: why am I renouncing this? It doesn't suit me. The objects that you renounce are those which do not suit your nature, your heart. These bits and pieces of renunciation:

renunciation of the world, renunciation of the objects of the world, renunciation of a certain lifestyle, renunciation of your family – all these may become necessary in the course of your own life. These have nothing to do with the spirit of renunciation, *niṣkāma bhāvana*. *Niṣkāma bhāvana* or the spirit of renunciation, the spirit of total desirelessness arises when one clearly sees that the individuality itself is questionable.

In pure and simple theological parlance: all things belong to God, and I am but a cell in this total being. What shall I ask for and what shall I renounce? That spirit of total surrender is *saṃnyāsa*, is *niṣkāma bhāvana* or the spirit of renunciation. The non-existent individuality does not renounce anything, has no business to renounce anything, and cosmic consciousness does not need to renounce anything. It is the false sense of possession and the false sense of individuality that need to be renounced. By whom? That's the million-dollar question.

Isn't there that intelligence in me, the intelligence which is loaded with sincerity? Vigilance, which means sincerity: that must guide from moment to moment, from situation to situation. Living in this workaday world, working in this workaday world, doing all that has to be done in this workaday world is no bar to the practice of this yoga.

Perhaps this is the right time to tell the story of Dharmavyādha, from the *Mahābhārata* (3.205-207). It is meant to illustrate that your lifestyle is less important than the spirit of living. Please remember that.

A young man wanted to become a yogi. He found a lovely text that said: „You must shave your head, and you can keep a moustache, and go and build yourself a hut on the bank of a river and do *japa* or *prāṇāyāma* for 16 hours a day, have your bath, eat some berries and drink water, and meditate. If you do that for six months, your *kuṇḍalinī* will be awakened and you will have enormous psychic powers. All that you will materialize. This is yoga."

So, he built himself a hut on the bank of a river and started his meditations under a tree. This went on for some time, he was getting more and more emaciated, he was not eating properly, probably not sleeping properly, only breathing, picking a few berries, eating this, and meditating.

One day he had finished all his morning ablutions, had his bath in the river and came towards the meditation seat under the tree. He was about to sit in his lotus posture, and something fell on his head! It had come from a crow. He looked up: „What is this? Who did this?" As soon as his gaze fell on that bird, it caught alight and was reduced to ashes.

He couldn't believe it: „My God, I've got it already! I've become a yogi!" The first thing he felt that the yogi wanted was to have some good food. He entered the first village, stood in front of the first house and asked for food.

A girl was just entering the house after returning from the river. He looked at her and said: „I want some food". She said: „Alright, please wait." She went inside the kitchen. He was waiting and he was waiting and he was waiting. She went from one room to the other, looking at him, nodding. „What does she think? When she will come back, I'll show her what I am!"

About half an hour later, she brought some food and said: „Have it.“ He harrumphs audibly. The girl said: „Don’t think I am also that crow. You can’t do that to me.“ Ah, how did she know that? First of all, the *hum* didn’t work, and secondly, she knew what he did to that, under the tree! He said: „How do you know, please tell me!”

She said: „My friend, you know, my husband is sick. I’ve been attending upon him. I’ve no time to explain all these things to you. Take this food, go. If you go to the next village, to such-and-such a house, there a teacher who will teach you. Find him.”

He didn’t even want to eat, he wanted to fly to the other place. He thought that that man was probably a great yogi, a sage with a beard, sitting in *samādhi*. To his horror, this was a butcher’s place. He looked round, thinking that probably he had come to the wrong place, the address was wrong.

As he was looking ‘round and ‘round, the young butcher said: „Hey, come here, you have come to see me!” „That’s funny. How do you know?” „I thought so. She asked you to see me, didn’t she?” „My God, this fellow knows that also!”

He was speechless and that man sat: „Sit down. We will have plenty of time to talk.” And he was chopping meat and distributing it and chopping meat and distributing it. „Well, this man is a yogi and I’m going to learn from him?” As he closed the shop, he closed his eyes for a few seconds, and then they went to his house. Once again, he was made to wait. The butcher was very busy with whatever he had to do, he had to serve his parents, all this was done.

Then he brought him some food, fell at his feet, and said: „First have this meal, and then when you have any questions, we’ll discuss.” The young man had his meal and said: „Thank you very much, I have understood everything” and walked away. It is the spirit in which all this is done.

Every now and then he closed his eyes and thought: „I’m not the doer, I’m not doing anything, I’m not getting anything out of it. There’s no I to do anything, to choose, there is no ego-sense to say no to what’s being done.” That can be done anywhere, in any situation.

10 There's Love

We were discussing the various *bhāvana*s. *Bhāvana* has again got 20 or 30 meanings. The meaning in which it is usually used is *inner attitude*. To use the word *inner motivation* is dangerous, because it is the motivation of non-motivation.

I personally feel like translating it *the expression of one's being*. The official translation makes it look a cosmetic application, cosmetic ethics. You know what cosmetic is: you put something on, on top of you, apply it, and as soon as you step into the sun or the rain, it gets washed out. If the translation as the *expression of one's being* is accepted, then an enigmatic statement made in the *Gītā* becomes a bit more comprehensible:

> *yaṁ yaṁ vāpi smaran bhāvaṁ*
> *tyajaty ante kalevaram* (8.6).

You see the word *bhāvaṁ*. *Tyajaty ante kalevaram*: whatever is the last thought or the attitude of the dying man, that determines the next birth. If I'm a vicious person all through my life and accidentally, I think of something very nice at the end of my life, that thought determines my next birth. Though there are some stories quoted in support of this, the other translation seems to make better sense: whatever be the inner nature, the expression of one's being at the time of abandoning this body, naturally that becomes the next incarnation!

Niṣkāma bhāvana is an inner attitude – let us use the word *attitude,* but bearing in mind the difference in connotation – of utter desirelessness. Desirelessness means non-pursuit of pleasure or renunciation of selfish action performed in pursuit of pleasure. Such renunciation is not possible, I repeat, unless there is an inner transformation.

We do not abandon what the inner being considers as pleasant, pleasurable, desirable, and good. That which is desirable is impossible to be not desired – that's a contradiction in terms. To call it *desirable* and then to abandon it is hypocrisy, that doesn't work.

So, the inner being must see that that object of pleasure is also the source of pain: what I consider pleasure has pain on the other side. If I see that, I abandon it. Why do I abandon it? I do not abandon pleasure, I abandon the root cause of my pain, what I know is undesirable. That's the reason for all these repeated descriptions of the painful consequences of pleasure. For instance, it is very difficult to see how profiteering or exploitation can lead to pain now. I'm profiting: I cheat you, I rob you, and all that is done legally, ethically, so I've got the government behind me and the head of the church, too.

There's nothing wrong with this at all, and there are not going to be any painful consequences now. Then somebody comes and says I'll go to hell. That is an unprovable and un-disprovable expression: „You'll go to hell". Again, if one abandons such a course of action, it is not because I am abandoning pleasure or something which is desirable; I'm abandoning this because I know that this leads to pain. It's important to bear this in mind: you cannot abandon what you consider pleasure.

That's why they insist on *satsaṅga* where you keep continually being told that this is going to lead you to trouble, if not now, later; look out! They hope that at one time or other, the rebellious part of your being that still sees it as something desirable and pleasurable will also see that pain and drop it. This to me is abundantly clear, that it is dropped only when the whole being sees the danger in this, sees it as something undesirable. As long as the idea of „this is pleasant, even pleasurable" is there, you won't give it up. It again must come deep from within, not as a cosmetic renunciation, but a renunciation of what the total being rejects as nuisance or dangerous.

With the attitude or *bhāvana* of desirelessness, the pursuit of pleasure is abandoned, so that we are able not to identify ourselves with the pleasant or the unpleasant experiences that inevitably pass through the personality. They flow through the personality; they don't stop there. I'm not running after one of them, I'm not rejecting the other, it just passes through.

The next important *bhāvana* in *karma* yoga is known as the *nimitta bhāvana*. Cosmic consciousness exists everywhere, and cosmic energy passes through all this, all this, all this, all this. As long as the personality lasts, all it does is done with this movement of energy that makes this body function in this world. Therefore, this seems to be responsible for what's happening now: am I sitting here and talking or not? How does one look upon this phenomenon? We have dealt with the experiences, what about the expression?

A beautiful answer is found in the *Gītā* again:

> *Mayaivaite nihatāḥ pūrvam eva*
> *nimittamātraṁ bhava savyasācin* (11.33).

I think you know the story that Arjuna refused to fight, saying that „if I fight, all these people would be killed, I have to kill them, so I won't do it." Kṛṣṇa responds, *mayaivaite nihatāḥ pūrvam eva*: „I have destroyed all these warriors even before. Merely be an instrument in my hands, merely be an instrument".

What does it mean? The orthodox commentator suggests that Kṛṣṇa had mentally or spiritually or psychically God's will: „I will that these things must be destroyed." That is the orthodox interpretation. But I have a very simple one: hasn't God already willed that all of us should die? You don't need another God springing up here, saying: „By my will I destroy you." When the birth certificate is stamped, on the other side is the death warrant. The fact of birth itself is the certainty of death. So Kṛṣṇa in effect says: „Don't worry about that, all of them are destined to die; merely be an instrument in the hands of the divine." That is *nimitta*. *Nimitta* is *instrument*, the attitude that I am merely an instrument, I am merely a channel for the flow of this cosmic energy.

The orthodox commentator uses Kṛṣṇa's flute as an example. It's a beautiful illustration: the flute is but an empty reed. There's nothing in it, and it is its emptiness that is its glory. The emptier it is, the better able it is to produce the most celestial music, provided it comes into contact with the divine. Empty yourself and I'll fill you with divine music – that's what it means.

The pen with which you are writing is an instrument in your hands, literally. Does it even know that it is an instrument in your hands? Does it jump up and say: „Am I not a good instrument?" Can you and I, being sentient beings, thinking beings, endowed with a tremendously powerful ego-sense, can you and I behave in exactly the same way as that pen does, without even thinking „I'm an instrument"? If I have to think: „I am an instrument", that attitude is also cosmetic attitude. It's something that is put on from outside, it doesn't spring from inside.

It must be assimilated. Assimilated means, it becomes similar to me, *as similar* to me, assimilated. When the attitude is assimilated, that itself functions just as the food that you ate a few months ago sitting there! Because it has been assimilated, it has become my body; this food has become me. Because that food has become me, it is sitting here without even knowing that „I'm the food that this fellow ate". No, it has become me. Cosmic energy flows everywhere. That is the concept. Can this concept become so thoroughly integrated that the personality is not even conscious of it? Can this concept be integrated in such a way that that acts?

The knowledge – not me, the knowledge that it is the cosmic energy that flows through, can the knowledge itself act? If it does, then *nimitta bhāvana* is perfect. Till then, it is still cosmetic. I've seen quite a number of yogis do that: „Oh, I'm a mere instrument in the hands of God. I'm really humble, just put a garland around my neck. I'm nothing, all he who does it."

Bluffing others is a clever pastime, bluffing oneself is waste of time. It's not that I recommend bluffing others, but often it's done, and it is a very clever pastime. But bluffing oneself is waste of time. *Nimitta bhāvana* is extremely difficult to understand. Exactly like the food that you eat: the cake is nice to look at. „Oh, it's great!" Yes, it is great. But then, before the cake could become that fitness that is you, it takes a long time – the process is very circuitous.

There is a possibility of indigestion and there is a possibility of getting sick and there is a possibility of acidity and so on, and you watch and carefully go on and on, till … you have completely forgotten the cake! And therefore, this assimilation does demand a submergence of this in your consciousness. As long as you're acting, feeling „I am an instrument in the hands of God", you're not.

You must become oblivious to that, oblivious in the sense that you are not calculating. It must become you and it, it works. When the theory comes to an end, that yoga happens, that is when Vedānta happens – Vedānta means: knowledge gets to an end. The knowledge that the personality is an instrument in the hands of the divine is *nimitta bhāvana*. And that is a non-dual consciousness.

The next is *nārāyaṇa bhāvana. Nārāyaṇa* is the name of a member of the trinity, but the word itself has got a number of meanings. Meaning number one is that it is the *abode* of *nāra, the abode of man*. Another is *the path that man treads*: „I'm the way" (*John* 14:6) has exactly the same meaning. The next is even more interesting: *the son of man*. *Nārāyaṇa* can mean all these three.

The energy flows through this personality and the personality knows that the energy is not mine. It is in fact and in truth the divine, and so the action, the real actor, the real doer, is the divine. But then, the flowing energy is directed to somebody or other: „I'm an instrument in the hands of God serving you".

As long as this feeling is there that *I serve you*, as long as *you* continues to be, the *I* either is there or is there, it is either manifest there or potentially there. It is not possible to have an object without the subject springing up, immediately or later. As long as this subject-object relationship is there, so long it is impossible to avoid a motivation.

I love you is a terribly inadequate, if not false expression. I don't think most of you even think that this sentence is complete; „I love you … because." There is a motivation, why: why do I love you and not somebody else? And if there is no reason at all, why should I love only one person and not everybody else? The reason may be dormant or active, latent or patent. The reason is there, and the motivation is therefore there. So, any dual relationship – *I serve you*, *I love you* – has a motivation somewhere. If I think that it is not there, then I have not looked properly.

Then the whole vicious circle begins to swing very violently. I love you because I admire you, and then I serve you – *I love you* means *I serve you*, naturally; you, not someone else. From there on, I'm hurt and I'm hurt. Life becomes a series of disappointments because I love you, even if I do not expect anything from you, even if my motivation is nearly pure – *nearly pure* is impure! – and I do not expect anything from you at all: I don't want any material reward, I don't want you to scratch my back, I don't even want you to reciprocate it. But I'm hurt if you hate me. This *I love you*, as long as there is this duality, is not love.

People have renounced their wife: „I don't love my wife because this is attachment!" Then I go and get hooked onto somebody else: „Oh, this is divine!" People abandon their children and go and donate to an orphanage. What for? Silly!

In the movement of cosmic consciousness, there are no questions; in love, there is no question. When you are sleeping, you don't ask: „Why am I sleeping now? I could just as well have been meditating; I could be in the kitchen washing dishes." Can love also operate in that manner? Can this cosmic energy move without asking any questions whatsoever? I don't love you; it's the cosmic energy that flows. It doesn't love you – it's the cosmic energy that flows.

Then, there is no disappointment at all. When there is no division, there is no disappointment; there is no desire and there is no disappointment, there is no hope and therefore there is no frustration.

There's a story which is given in one of Ramakrishna's books. A young man was brought up in a monastery. It was an all-male monastery and there was no female allowed, not even a female bird, no picture, nothing. So, he had no idea that the world is made of male and female; he had seen only boys right from his childhood. Suddenly his master died of a heart-attack. His master used to go every day at noontime to a nearby village and get some food; that much the boy knew.

When this man died, the young boy, who was about ten or 15, had to go and beg for food. He went to the village, stood in front of the first house and said: „Would you give some food?" The old man used to go there, so they knew that. Instead of him there was this boy.

A young girl of the house came forward. This was in some part of South India where even ladies go topless. So, she appeared topless and wanted to give him some food. The young man looked at her. He looked, and then, the grandmother was standing behind this girl and, very solicitous, he said: „You know, a couple of years ago, I also had these boils on my body, and it was extremely painful, and my guru brought some herbs, crushed them as compresses and tied it up, then it got better. This girl has got a couple of them; I think it's better to put some compresses."

The grandmother merely sized up the innocence of this boy and said: „My son, they are not boils. They are natural." Then of course the young man was curious: „What are these then?" She explained that they are provided by God, even when she's young, to feed the children she may give birth to later. He listened to it: „Hmm, what am I begging all this food for?" If that God or cosmic intelligence provides for some baby which may not be conceived at all, as she may not marry at all – when this cosmic intelligence is so intelligent, so clever, what are you worried about?

When this duality of *mine-not mine* has completely gone, there's love. Not *I love you* – there is love. Love is that pure movement of energy in cosmic consciousness. It does not do any distinctions at all, it does not know any difference. It's the purest expression of oneness, oneness in which even the duality, even the suggestion of duality – the two are one – even that idea is not there.

So, it is not possible for your mind to conceive of this love. The mind divides. It first divides, it creates duality where no duality exists and then it pretends to bring the two together in what is called, what it calls *love*. This is all mere idea.

Therefore, what you and I call *love* – *I love you* – is no love at all. *I* is only an idea. This is I, that *you* is also I, so when this I says *I love you*, it means: this idea is in love with that idea, that's all. That's not love, that's also an idea.

When this is seen, this idea collapses here, that idea entertained by this also collapses, and there is pure love which does not question – there is no question at all. „Must I not look after my child, must I not look after the children of this world?" – those ideas do not arise. What is, is.

Is it possible at all, whether there is a householder life or a *saṃnyāsī* life or an ashram life or whatever life it is, is it possible at all to have a pattern of an organization, a society, a social set-up in which the you will not exist? It is inherent in the mind! As long as the mind functions and as long as the I functions, the you comes into being. So, therefore, without getting worked up about all this, can this truth be gently received, chewed up, and allowed to be assimilated?

All throughout the *karma* yogi's life he's vigilantly watchful to see where this idea of I arises, I being but an idea. Where does this idea arise? Because once that idea arises, it creates you, and then struggles to cancel this idea and that idea, and so on, by all this.

Intelligence is there. So *karma* yoga is the art of allowing that intelligence to function without the inference of the mind or the emotions. Can that intelligence be allowed to function without the

interference of the mind or the emotions? It's the purest of intelligence and it can work wonders. Let this intelligence flow and let it work, it's beautiful.

Even in your yoga *āsana* classes probably you have noticed that. I'm saying: „You listen to the body." It's only a medium, a sentence we often use. Let the intelligence in the body decide what to do. You will find your *āsana*s excellent and rewarding. But then the mind, the brain comes along and says: „Oh, she does it beautifully. I can also do it, if only I push a little bit." Cut! It goes. Or you like to do it, or you dislike doing something, or you're afraid of doing something, then again, something goes wrong. Keep these two things out and what happens is beautiful.

Bhakti Yoga

1 Division and Devotion

The orthodox view is that *karma* yoga as the means purifies the heart and *bhakti* makes it flow towards the ideal, goal, God, or whatever it is, and that then, through the practice of meditation, one steadies the mind and finally one gets enlightenment, illumination. But if we look a little more closely at the whole structure of *bhakti*, we may discover that it contains elements of all the yoga practices. It's not an isolated practice as such. It is probably the same as *karma* yoga, it is probably the same as *rāja* yoga, though it is called *devotion*, though it is called the *love of God*.

We saw that in the case of *karma* yoga, one is dynamic, one is involved in action. In and through action one realizes the omnipresence of consciousness. One realizes that all action belongs to the energy of cosmic consciousness. Perhaps the emphasis in *karma* yoga has been on action, and perhaps the emphasis in *bhakti* yoga may be on devotion or love. But what is love in which there is no action? „I love you, bye-bye!" is not such a marvelous type of love.

If you love somebody, you are involved all the time in doing something. Not doing for the sake of doing – that love itself does something, doesn't it? Because life is action, life is motion. If there is love in the heart, it must express itself, it must infiltrate every aspect of your personality. It must speak, it must hear, it must see – whatever happens must happen with love. Whatever you do, even if you spank, you must still do it with love. Yes, you may spank your children. But even that is done with love.

Love without action is – hypocrisy. I wanted to say *lame*, but it is not even that. It's pure, sheer hypocrisy. And action without love is something mechanical, there is nothing there. Action without love is business. I'm sorry – even in business you love the money or the success! The results or the success are something. Without the affection no action is meaningful.

So, *karma* yoga involves *bhakti*, and *bhakti* involves *karma* yoga. As we said, the very pinnacle of *karma* yoga is considered as *ātma-bhāva bhāvanā*: to feel that God is in all, in what is called the *me* and in what is called the *you*, as the connecting link or the substratum, as the interpenetrating reality. That is the cosmic consciousness, and instead of using the word *cosmic consciousness*, if it's a bit too involved, we will use the word *God* – there's no harm in that. We will probably come back to that: in Sanskrit there's the word *īśa* or *īśvara,* as in *Veṅkaṭeśa*. *Īśa* is usually translated as *God*, *Lord*. But *īśa* may merely mean what the first two letters mean in English: something which *is*.

What is the central feature of *g-o-d*? Zero! There's nothing! It's not as though there is some kind of ready-made stuff given to you as *God* – it's a mysterious something. You may call it *perfection*, you may call it a *circle*, you may call it *zero*. It's for you to discover it.

So, they said that in order to serve all, feeling the presence of God in all, one must discover this, understand this, know God. Only if you know that that God is omnipresent, or is that cosmic being, then

it's possible to be honest in saying: „I'm serving the Lord in all", otherwise it's hypocrisy. Maybe it's *sādhana*, it's a means: I have still not reached the point, I'm trying to. *I'm trying to* means an attempt.

Why do I not succeed? Because the whole thing is in the brain. It's the brain that hears all these truths, reaps all these truths and the brain cannot understand. That's simple, isn't it? To *stand under*. The brain is not standing under anything at all, it's on the top. What can stand under, what can understand the heart? Because it stands under the head. Understanding must be in the heart, not in the brain. The brain is *upperstanding*! As long as these things are merely intellectual, they are useless. Intellectual concepts, they are useless. They may be of some use to you, if they inspire you to understanding. How does one understand? By switching the brain off for a little while and opening the heart.

I think most of you have heard of this *śaktipāt*, direct transmission of energy. That is, the guru transmits his energy and awakens yours. Ramana Maharshi is explaining this phenomenon and suggests what the disciple should do: not by merely sitting and looking at the guru could you get this *śaktipāt*, but when the intellect is completely silent, at peace, and therefore inoperative, which means transparent. The heart is opening. When you listen with the heart, when you see with the heart, when you sense with the heart, when you learn with the heart, you understand. *Śaktipāt* happens, suddenly, it becomes clear.

As long as the truth is apprehended with your brain, with your intellect, with your mind, it's cloudy, clouded because the mind throws up all these concepts. As soon as it enters the brain, the brain begins to work furiously, awakening all these memories: „Come on! So, what is this, what is this, what is this, and what is this?" The memory springs up and says: „Oh, I've heard this before. Silly nonsense, some philosophy. I've heard that before, I saw that before." That's cloud! It's all linked to memory, it's all linked to the dead past, and so nothing happens at all. When the brain apprehends something, there is no freshness to it. You cannot look at something without the brain linking it with the past. You cannot hear something without the brain linking it to the past. So, is it possible for me to quiet the intellect and let the heart open?

Once you have this image of the heart opening up, you suddenly see the whole thing as a lovely, poetical picture: the sun of wisdom rises and the lotus opens – that sort of thing. They are beautiful! The brain should not be applied to this at all, it's the heart that should respond to it. And the heart's response to the truth is known as *bhakti*.

As usual, I'm merely putting the other points of view, so that we may start with a little bit of an open mind and not get hung up on dogmas. The popular theory is that after *karma* yoga, there is *bhakti*, and then *rāja*, and eventually *jñāna. Jñāna* is supposed to be the supreme, final. But there is at least one great master who said: „No, rubbish. *Jñāna* is the means for *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is supreme, *bhakti* is the last. Once there is *bhakti*, you go into ecstasy. You lose yourself into the love of God, and then it's finished." It's finished even in *karma* yoga, if you do it properly. Any yoga involves all other yoga.

Swami Śivānanda's argument was that you cannot love something really and fully and with whole soul, whole-hearted, unless you know all about it. If you do not know me, you cannot love me! If you are only acquainted with me, you may be attracted: „Ah, a nice guy." It's still not that love. Because there are

aspects of this personality that you do not know, there is one sneaking suspicion, he may still throw up something which may turn me off completely. So, he said: unless you know something completely and thoroughly, you cannot love it. Even in the relation to God, he said that only *jñāna*, total *jñāna*, complete knowledge, can enable us to love the supreme being.

What does the word *bhakti* mean? Look in a dictionary and you've got a shock. I looked up the meaning in a small dictionary, a very elementary one. It doesn't even contain quite a number of important words, like *nirvāṇa*. The first meaning given there for *bhakti* is „Partition. Distribution. To be a part of, belonging to anything. Portion. Appurtenance. Part. Division". *Bhakti* also means *division*! „Streak, line" in the sense of *dividing line*. „Order. Succession. Attachment. Devotion. Homage. Honor. Respect. Worship. Faith in. Assumption of the form of." All these can be called *bhakti*.

What is interesting and intriguing is that *bhakti* is supposed to be the two things together: *assuming the form of* or *becoming one with* as also *division*! That is why Swami Sivananda often said: „*Bhakti* starts with duality and it ends in union." Verbally, you repeat the words: „God is omnipresent. God is all this. *Sarvam nārāyaṇaṁ sarvam viṣṇumayaṁ sarvam bhramayaṁ* – all this is God." Why must I use the words „God is omnipresent"? Because it's not real to me! It is still not real, that's why I'm saying it.

A division has happened. How it has happened I do not know, and perhaps it is futile for me to bother about it. As Buddha remarked: when the house is on fire, you don't try to study the composition of fire and the material that is burning. You try to put it out, as soon as possible. The division has already taken place, as far as I'm concerned. But then, on the one hand, I see this existence, or life, with this division is torture. That is clear, perfectly clear, that as long as you and I exist, you can be my friend and you can be my enemy. You can love me, or you can hate me. These two possibilities exist as long as the division exists, as long as the duality exists. And so, I'm frightened.

> *Dvitīyādvai bhayaṃ bhavati*
> (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4.2).

As long as there is duality, there is fear, whether it is manifest or unmanifest, potentially. That I see. I also see that if there is no duality, there is peace, there is happiness. The most obvious proof of this is sleep. In sleep, there is no experience of duality, and one wakes up with the feeling that in sleep one was at peace within oneself, and happy.

Then come these sages and yogis who tell us that it is possible to have the same thing in the non-sleep states. They also tell us that oneness is the truth and that duality is an appearance. It's a concept. As I was once taking a little boy to the beach in Mauritius, from out of the windows of the car he looked and he said: „*Ah, c'est de l'eau, ça*!" He didn't see the ocean. Instead of seeing the ocean, he saw but water! I thought: My God, why didn't I think of it before? To you, it is not water. To you, it is a lake! At the surface of the lake there are millions of ripples and waves. What are these millions of ripples and waves? If not water, then lake. *Lake* is a word, and I think more than a word.

Can you take the waves away from the lake and bring it here? If you hold a mirror in front of that lake, is the diversity in the mirror? In the mirror you still see the lake and the ripples and the waves, all the

diversity. But the mirror does not see diversity at all, even as the child. A pure mind does not see diversity, the diversity is seen in a divided mind. All this seems to be clear. *Seems* to be clear – you know why? Because this is intellectual. There is no understanding of it. When you say: „Waves are on top of the lake", you are creating a division where no division exists! There is no division between the wave and the lake. „Look at the waves that are playing on the surface of the lake." It's a poetic view, but it's not true. The wave is the lake and the lake is the wave!

When I see the division outside, I see that the division is in me. I have created the division, or I have become aware of the division. That is where I start, that is where I find myself. There is no use in trying to jump upon such-and-such truth – you cannot do it. I find myself in this position. I open my eyes and I see the division. And yet I can see that in this division, in this duality, in this diversity, in the life that is caught up in this diversity, that is victimized by this diversity, there is fear, there are different emotions. These emotions terrorize the whole life. There is love sometimes, there is hate sometimes; first you love something and then you hate something, there is fear, jealousy, greed, anger, violence.

Diversity brings all these things into this life. As long as this diversity is there, these will also be there. I see that it is possible to live without diversity: there is a state in which diversity does not exist, and in that state – sleep – the emotional upheavals are also absent. On top of this, these sages and saints suggest that as a matter of fact, that is the truth. They assure us that that oneness is the truth and that this is an error, and we have hypnotized ourselves into the belief that this is real, that the diversity was real. From there we start. So, we start from not-acceptance of division. We start from the vision of division.

What is division? Divided vision. Division is nothing but divided vision. *There* and *here*, *that* and *this* – and therefore, there is constant movement of energy from one to the other, and therefore, there is *e-motion*. This is quite simple, and I think it is nice. The energy has to move somewhere, and it can move in two ways. One is where there is emotion, externalized emotion, and the other is devotion, where there's in-depth motion in oneself, into oneself.

Ramana Maharshi puts it very beautifully. He says that emotion is externalized motion, and the other one is heart-motion – motion towards the heart, motion into the heart. That is where the circle completes itself without externalizing and spiraling. That devotion is called *God-love* or *bhakti*: the division and the immediate balancing of the division, the immediate cancellation of the division, the immediate understanding of the unity within that division.

You can see two ends of a handkerchief. When you really and truly see the two ends of the handkerchief, the handkerchief is not there. When you see the handkerchief, the two ends are not there. When you see that there's a handkerchief, there are not two ends. But when you are worried about the two ends, there is no handkerchief. You start with this, you start with the duality, and suddenly the two ends seem to flow towards each other, into one another, and only one is seen – the handkerchief is seen. That's the culmination of *bhakti*, that's the culmination of love, where you start with two and they don't become one – the ends do not become one.

You realize that the two ends are a production of *veda*. There are not two ends! There were no two ends. I was told that there were two ends and I kept on thinking that there were two ends. I didn't have to bring them together like this at all. This is the magic. The two ends are not brought together. Then you tie a knot. No, I leave the two ends as they were, and suddenly I realize that the division of the handkerchief into two ends was but an error, and all the time there was only one handkerchief. The division is abolished without anything being disturbed. You and I still continue to be you and I, but without being you and I. We don't have to be pleasant together in order to become one, but sustaining what originally appeared to be diversity, the unity is realized. The brain's thoughts still continue to be waves. The ripples remain ripples. Nothing has taken place at all, and yet a complete revolution has taken place. That is called *bhakti*.

So, on the one hand, *bhakti* means *division*, and on the other, the same word means *devotion*. Look at it from one point of view and there seems to be a division: I and you. Man and God. Blink and look again: with devotion or love the two are seen to be forever one.

How does one actually realize this? Not intellectually. How is every cell of your being unconditioned, so that this error may be removed from every cell of your being, from your mind, from your heart, from your limbs – from every part of your body, from every part of your psychological apparatus, so that with all your being you suddenly wake up to this truth that the whole thing was just an error? It was just nothing.

We don't want to change the world, we don't want to do anything at all, and yet something has happened. When we're all asleep together, in the same hall, your body remains your body and his body remains his body. And yet, all distinctions are wiped out, and there is homogeneity. How is this brought about while in our waking state? That is known as *bhakti* yoga.

2 The Realization of Bliss

There's a beautiful expression used in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, that the enlightened person is like a jar that is immersed in water: full of water, inside, outside, everywhere. There is an apparent individuality to that jar, just like there is an apparent individuality of the room, though space is indivisible. This indivisible duality being individuality, that is the nature of the individual: one, and yet apparently dual.

It is usually a waste of time arguing why or how this individuality or duality arises. The individuality is temporarily suspended, made inoperative. We awaken ourselves to the duality. While you were asleep, you and the bed had become one. As you wake up, suddenly you realize that you were sleeping in bed.

The bed wasn't there a few minutes ago. How has it come into being? If this was true, how did it disappear last night? You can ask the question in both ways. I lay down – I know that I lay down – and turned over, and suddenly the bed disappeared. If it was real, how did it go away? If it was not real, how has it arisen now? That's the problem. It's usually academic, which means of no practical value, and therefore most people do not indulge in it. And yet there is this nagging doubt, especially when we realize that this love, *bhakti*, is also a divider. *I love you* is a division, the *love* there being the meeting point. What divides also unites.

If this union or coming-together is in fact the ultimate goal, why have they become separated at all? That question is of no consequence. Buddha would dismiss it, saying: „Don't discuss all this, it's silly, a useless question". And yet, every time you bump into this, your mind throws up this question.

It's absolutely useless, just like the question: „What am I going to be in my next birth? What have I been in my past birth?". These are stupid questions which have no practical value at all. It doesn't matter whether I was a prince or a beggar or a monkey or a dog in the last birth. I am what I am now. It doesn't matter what I'm going to be in my next birth. Whether I'm going to be born as a monkey or a monk, I'm still going to die now. That's the immediate problem. So why not face death instead of peering into the future?

But yet, the structure and nature of the human mind seems to demand an answer to this. If oneness is the truth, and oneness is the ultimate goal again, the source, the beginning point and the end, then why did the one divide itself in the first place? Why did *bhakti* have to create the division, and afterwards the same *bhakti* works to bring the two together?

I do not know. Why has God created the world? Ask God. I do not know. This may be a fairly honest answer. But then, people are not satisfied with it. When your child asks you: „Mummy, what is this?" and you say: „I don't know, my son," he's disappointed. He expects the mother to be omniscient. Any mother, when she's harassed by an inquisitive child, one day or the other invents a reason why, like that the stork brought a baby to them last night. When you don't want to explain, or you don't know, you just invent a lovely story for the child to listen to. The child thinks: „Ah! My mummy is so fabulous and clever. She knows everything in the world!", and goes to sleep.

In the same way, we ask: „How is it that the one which was perfect in the first place, created all these individuals? Why was man created at all? Why was I created at all? Assuming that God is cosmic consciousness, why did this division take place at all?“. If you look at that wave again, you realize that no division has taken place. But in the case of the individuality, it doesn't satisfy, it's not real to me. That oneness is not real. Even if there is oneness, I am still going to say: „I and God is one". I and God are two! If I and God are one, then why do you say so? God and I is one. You're running out of grammar here! I and God is one. Or I and God am two.

In some systems of theology, there is an answer which meets the question „Why did God create mankind, the world?“: for the salvation of man. But why has man to be created in the first place? For the redemption of man. You can redeem somebody only after damning him. Why did God redeem him? It's a circular argument, you can go round and round, till someone has the honesty and the moral courage to say: „I don't know“.

That you were happy and peaceful in sleep you become aware only after waking up. Can you from this wakeful state sort of look at yourself while you were sleeping? I was happy, I was peaceful. No, that's not right: I was happiness, I was peace. But that happiness and that peace I did not taste, I did not enjoy, isn't it? While you are sleeping, you are not consciously experiencing happiness, you are not consciously experiencing peace. Within you, while you are in that homogeneous state, the wish arises: I wish I could enjoy this happiness! I am happiness. I wish that I could enjoy it. I wish that I could experience it! That wish to experience one's own happiness creates the duality. You wake up, and as soon as you wake up, you realize that you are in bed. The duality has been created.

The metaphysicians have a little more complicated way of putting this. The supreme being or the one, cosmic consciousness, cosmic being is not only being and consciousness, but in that homogeneous state, there is obviously great peace and joy. The conscious being, the cosmic consciousness which is cosmic being, with cosmic power and energy hidden in it undergoes the same as you while asleep. The question stirs somewhere: how happy am I? Am I really happy? Am I really bliss, am I really blissful, and what does it mean? I cannot taste it, I'm not aware of it, I don't experience it.

Because of the absence of this duality, there is no experience of this peace, there is no experience of this happiness. I don't know how powerful I am. I do not know how happy I am. So, in this cosmic consciousness, there is this question: „what exactly is the nature of my sweetness? What exactly is the nature of my bliss?" It is said that in order to experience the bliss that is inherent in this cosmic consciousness or cosmic being that cosmic being sort of separated itself, created a division between consciousness and bliss.

You've seen babies do this. You give the child a large candy. It puts it into its mouth and then it tastes: it tastes sweet. But then it wonders: „What is sweet? I don't see anything!“ Take it into the hand: „Ah! This is what is sweet!“ We all have had the same experience.

Perhaps you have seen how a little baby, literally an infant, picks up his foot and puts it into its mouth. Some pediatricians may be fond of explaining it, saying that it is looking for its mother. It may not! The

Oriental has a different explanation, and you might have seen a picture of this. There's a lovely little verse:

> *karāravindena padāravindaṁ mukhāravinde viniveśayantam*
> *vaṭasya patrasya puṭe śayānaṁ bālaṁ mukundaṁ manasā smarāmi*
> (*Bālamukundastotram,* 1).

The verse describes a picture: salute to the Lord – Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu, who are the same. And what does this lord look like? He looks like a little baby, a blue baby lying on a leaf, floating on water. This baby gently pulls its own foot and sucks the toe. You look at that baby that is called Viṣṇu: What are you doing there? The baby seems to say that: „During the last cosmic cycle, millions of people used to kiss my foot, saying nectar flows from that foot. I'm wondering: how sweet is my foot? If it is so sweet, I myself want to taste it. Not only my devotees, I myself want to see how sweet my feet are. So I'm putting it into my own mouth."

That is the explanation. The cosmic consciousness wishing to experience its own bliss, creates this division between itself and the bliss, and then seeks to enjoy it. The enjoyment is given to you in the myths and legends, especially the Kṛṣṇa-legends where Kṛṣṇa is continually portrayed as dancing with these *gopī*s, seeking union with the *gopī*s, with his friends. It is not as though Kṛṣṇa is moved by a need for sexual companionship, but this is the purpose for which this whole creation has been brought about, so that God can enjoy his own bliss, God can experience his own bliss.

This seems to satisfy some part of the intelligence, the heart more than the intellect. In truth, there is no answer to this. After having said that there is no answer, this is probably the most satisfying answer. The division having arisen – what do we do? Go back to your own sleep! This is the best, so that you don't get muddled in theological quests. Ah, to rest blissful, peaceful, beautiful, to be able to sleep soundly, without any worries and any bother, no sorrow, no trouble at all, no anxiety, no love, no hate, nothing! While you stir in bed, you're still chewing that experience of sleep. The mind is after happiness, the mind is after peace. It is looking for peace, it is looking for happiness. You wonder why you don't go back to sleep.

Is the problem clear? I'm looking for happiness. Why must I go to work? In order to go get money and then to be happy. My God, why don't you doze off to sleep, you were very happy before! If my natural urge is to seek happiness and it is obvious that while I was asleep, there was this happiness, why don't I go back to that sleep state after waking up? Because it is veiled. When you are awake, you don't know how to get there.

Since that is veiled, I begin to look here and there: oh, it's a beautiful morning, and it is lovely to walk there, and it's lovely to have a cup of coffee. Why do you want a cup of coffee? Sleep was more marvelous than this! But that's veiled. I don't know how to get there. When sleep overpowers me, I sleep. I don't know how to get into sleep! If you know how to get into sleep voluntarily, then you are in *samādhi*. You're there in sleep – you are in *samādhi*, you are in meditation, you're in God. Since that is veiled, seeking this happiness, seeking for peace I am looking for it in all other things.

It was the same God, the one cosmic consciousness which playfully threw up a wave which is non-different from it, non-different from the totality. Why did it so throw up an individuality? In order that it may experience its own bliss, and this individuality, instead of returning to its source immediately and tasting it, wanders around in all this. That is the simplest explanation given, which seems to be very nice. Eventually, the whole creation is regarded as *līlā*. *Līlā* means play. A delightful and very important sequel to this is that you don't ask too many questions. The rules of a play are all arbitrary, somebody invented those rules. You don't ask: „Why is the football so thick?" This is the world as God's play.

Now the word *realization* is becoming a bit more real to us. It's not as though I'm going to have some kind of vision. It is all there; this is the totality! The totality has as it were created a diversity within itself in order to experience its own bliss, its own sweetness. The realization of this is the goal of *bhakti*, is *bhakti*. Omnipotence is inherent in that cosmic being, bliss is inherent in that cosmic being, just as bliss is inherent in your sleep state. Do I realize it? In other words: while you are asleep, do you realize that you are in bliss, in great peace, in great joy? No. In order to realize the bliss that is inherent in you, you wake up.

That is the first aspect of *bhakti*, the division. From there on you're looking for the same bliss, the same peace, till once again you realize it has been there all the time. I made a mistake in asking for it – that's all. The cosmic being wishing to realize its bliss creates the division. And the divided thing, endeavoring to re-capture this bliss, realizes, it has been always there. The end and the beginning are simultaneous.

That whole process is called *bhakti*. From realization to realization! It is not so that we are jumping from ignorance to enlightenment – it is from enlightenment to enlightenment, it's a cycling motion. It is a cycling motion, or a spiral motion, both being the same. From that point – how blissful am I? How powerful am I? – when that question arises, the spiral is formed, till it realizes that I'm not outside this totality. That's where the whole game comes to an end, and that's called *bhakti*.

There is a text called *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*, a beautiful, lovely little text which is regarded as a textbook of devotion, *bhakti*. A very significant feature of it is that the word *God* is not specifically used nor described. Even the word *īśvara* occurs only once or twice. The word that is used throughout is *that*:

Sā tvasmin parama prema rūpā (2).

Tat: *that* or *asmin: in it* or *in that*.

What is *bhakti*, what is love, what is devotion? *Sā – that, that devotion, devotion, asmin –towards that, parama prema – supreme devotion, supreme affection*. *Prema* is intense love, intense affection. Intense affection for that is *bhakti*.

What is *that*? Oh, I don't know. You will look for it for yourself. It is not a sort of ready-made God with six eyes and four arms and fifteen noses, which you are supposed to love. There is something within you and which is also omnipresent, to which the mind naturally flows. It's the cosmic being. *Īśvara* means *is, it is, what is when what appears to be has been reduced to what is* – that is *īśa, īśvara,* God. That,

towards which your whole being naturally flows with intense longing, yearning, that is God. That natural yearning or longing is *bhakti*. All else is emotionalism.

> *Sā tvasmin parama prema rūpā*
> *amṛta sva rūpā ca* (2-3).

That again is of the nature of immortality, eternity, infinity. It is undying; this love is undying because that to which it is directed is undying and that from which it springs is undying.

When we say: „I love you", and I disappear within ten days and then you disappear within ten days, what's this *I love you*? Rubbish. But there, in the case of *bhakti*, in the case of devotion, or love of God, or love of the omnipresent, love of the eternally existent, that from which this love arises is eternal, that towards which it is directed is eternal, and therefore it itself is eternal.

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa widens this definition a lot more, again on the analysis of man waking up. As soon as you wake up, if you watch, what is your first thought? You are looking for happiness. But your approach to happiness is different from her approach to happiness. He is thinking about how to make more money, she is thinking about children, you are thinking about the ashram. Somebody may be an alcoholic, as soon as he wakes up, the arm reaches out – where is it? But there is one thing in common in all of them, and that is: they are all looking for happiness.

There's a beautiful verse in the *Gītā*:

> *caturvidhā bhajante māṁ janāḥ sukṛtino 'rjuna* (7.16).

Whereas others have tried to belittle the alcoholic, the money-grabber or the sensualist, Kṛṣṇa says: „Don't worry!" They're all on the same path, on the same road. Only you are a little bit ahead of the queue, or the other man may be a bit further behind. They're all seeking happiness!

> *Ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha* (7.16):

There are four types of devotees. Four types of people think of God, contemplate, meditate on God, pray: *ārta* – one who is sick, in pain. He wants relief from pain, and he prays to God for relief from pain; *jijñāsur* – one who is curious, who wants to know, students like us who may or may not be deeply involved in the practice of yoga, but we want to know a little bit about it; *arthārthī* – one who wants money, maybe to fulfill his needs or desires.

One who seeks wealth also prays, one who seeks health also prays, one who seeks knowledge also prays, and then, there is the other person, who is a *jñānī*. He knows, he knows the truth. He says: „I'm caught. There's no sense in asking why. I don't know why I pray. I don't know why I meditate at all. I don't know why I love God. I'm in it. There's no why here." He realizes that it is inevitable that eventually the heart must love God, because this is why this whole creation has been brought about.

A few other statements in the *Bhagavad Gītā* are also interesting in this connection: whatever you pray for, whatever you wish to attain, it is that cosmic being that brings it about, gives it to you. It can't but come from God. All that we experience is from God, all that we do is from God, the same energy dancing

around. That is what makes all things possible. One who realizes this is spontaneously involved in this devotion. One who does not, he thinks otherwise, but thinking otherwise does not alter the nature of truth. The wave is water, the wave is the lake, it is non-different from the lake. It is not independent of the lake, even if the wave thinks it is independent. But right in the beginning we get a beautiful vision of *bhakti*: that is intense longing for that – *that* standing here for God, or cosmic consciousness, cosmic being, anything. That is the point! That – that which is.

When we practice what we call *meditation*, the first few minutes are always devoted to listening to the breathing. That's an easy and simple trick of turning the mind upon itself. At that moment, you introduce the mantra into it, synchronized with the breathing, so that it becomes easy. When a rhythm is established, you don't have to battle to keep it there. If a rhythm is established with the help of the breath, synchronizing the mantra with the breath, that part is taken care of.

Then for the rest of the time I am merely watching to see if the mantra is kept clear. If it is not clear, the mind is sleepy, drowsy. Sometimes it is looking here, sometimes it is looking there. Is a distraction distracting me or am I distracting the distraction? I am attracting the distraction. Why am I looking outside, why shouldn't I look here?

Therefore, we often found that this is another big help to begin with: to be aware that you are seated there, on the chair. See if you can even become aware of the little inconvenience, if the chair is not molded to help me sit with crossed legs, so I can feel my left ankle suspended. My toes are touching the edge of the chair, the ankle is suspended, and so on. Can I become clearly aware of that? Can I become clearly aware that the back is in contact with the back of the chair?

If you do that, you'll find that the mind doesn't wander about anymore. I'm here. The body is here, so maybe the mind better be here. This I discover very soon, that it's useless for the mind to be in London if the body is here. When both are here at the same time, that makes things easy, right?

That's the first step. Then as I listen to the breathing, I realize: I'm breathing. For the present time, I'm doing nothing else. I'm not moving. So, I become aware of that. Since the body is breathing, the mind can as well attend to that instead of thinking something else, doing something else. Then it becomes easy to slip the mantra in. That's all. The rest of the time you merely watch the reflection of the mantra.

Thoughts come and go. That's alright. Let them be there! What does it matter to me? One has to distinguish between the thoughts I think and the thoughts that merely happen, when the mind is not interested. *Interested* means: you are in it. What kind of thought takes you for a ride? The thought in which you are interested. You are in it, so you go away. If you are not interested, nothing on earth will distract you.

We can never be distracted by what we are not interested in. And that is the meaning or the whole concept of what is known as *vairāgya*, dispassion.

Abhyāsa vairagya ābhyāṁ tan nirodhaḥ (*Yoga Sūtras* 1.12):

The mind is brought under control by practice and by *vairāgya*, dispassion. It is by watching what happens in meditation that I become aware of what I am attracting to distract me, and that shows what I'm interested in. During the rest of the day, I try to – I wanted to say „push that distraction out", whereas probably it would be more honest to say: „to pull myself out of that distraction".

It's beautiful. There are some people who think that meditation is a very serious thing. I don't think so. It's fun. You learn a lot about yourself!

3 A Pleasure Cruise Through the Divine

Imagine yourself on a boat crossing the lake. The boat tears through it, making a division, parting the water, plowing through it. If you run to the rear deck and watch, there is a wake behind it – commotion, terrible commotion. The water is churning.

If you look a bit further aback, behind you – what was parted is brought back again. That's exactly what happens in *bhakti*. Then again, it's possible to see – another simple comparison, when you are still thinking of the boat – this *bhakti* is more like a pleasure cruise. What do you do when you go upon a pleasure cruise? You start from, let's say Vancouver. You go to Hawaii, and Japan, Australia, and New Zealand and so on, and then you come back to Vancouver. „If I had to come back here, why did I leave this place at all?" That's what is called *pleasure*, isn't it? You want to enjoy yourself, and in order to enjoy yourself you leave this place, go round and come back to the same place. That is what God is doing all the time.

The moment you apply your intellect, your rational mind, your logical mind to it, the whole thing sounds absurd, and so will everything sound absurd in life. Why do I have to put food into this mouth when I know that it is going to disintegrate? This is ridiculous! If the intellect is brought into it, it's a disaster. So, it must be understood heart to heart: *bhakti* means *division* as well as *devotion*, devotion meaning oneness, division meaning twoness, and so it creates diversity first, in the one, and later the diversity is harmonized and blended into one. Why should the one be divided into diversity? We don't know.

Instead of saying that we don't know, we call it all sort of things, and eventually the only reasonable – emotionally reasonable – explanation is that it is the divine play. The Christians call it *divine mystery*, the Hindus call it *divine play*, *līlā*. Here again you find a paradox – paradox in the sense that this cannot be taught, this cannot be really communicated, one has to catch it within oneself.

We are told that all this is God, that we must eventually see God in everything, yet right until the penultimate stage, there is a constant division. What your heart does not accept as God now must be ruthlessly avoided: „*māyā*!" In *bhakti* they don't call it *māyā*, the *māyā* concept comes in *jñāna*. In *bhakti,* it's almost like Satan: this is something bad, evil, thus evil company must be avoided. It's there in the *Bhakti Yoga Sūtras*:

> *strī dhana nāstika caritram na śravanīyam* (63).

„One should never listen to news or stories about these three: women, wealth, and atheistic doctrines." One should avoid all this, like plague, so that whereas on the one hand I am being told that God is omnipresent and that you must realize this omnipresent God, at the same time I`m told: „Keep away from this, keep away from that!" In other words, first I must see: the mind works on the basis of division. The mind creates this division, and while the mind creates this division, it is bound to create a division into what I like and what I do not like.

The mind divides everything. Unless that function of the mind is stopped, the union is not possible. Then I look at the same thing again: what does the mind divide things into? I like this, I don't like this. So, by

some magic, I must make this unlikeable and that likeable. What the mind likes, I must make it dislike. When thus the division between *I like* and *I don't like* is canceled, then I have arrived at the no-mind stage. When there's no mind, there is enlightenment. Why all this complication?

One should bear in mind through these discussions that there is this complicated contradiction – complicated because it looks like a contradiction, but if you go underneath, understand with the heart, you might discover that it is really not contradiction. It is something inherent in nature and which I have to discover: a contradiction which is really complementary; a contradiction on the superficial level, complementary deeper down.

So, *bhakti* is what recognizes an existent division and a potential oneness at the same time: an existent division between you and me, an existent division between me and the cosmos and the cosmic being, and a potential oneness. That cosmic being is temporarily known as *God*. Why should we call it *God*? You've got to use some word; use any word you like, it doesn't matter.

That's important to remember, because it is not the word that we are worshipping, it is not the word that we want to become one with, it is the truth which the word seems to represent. The word does not represent God. *Jehovah* does not represent God, *Oṁ* does not represent God, but the mind, associating this with that, links this word with God. It means nothing.

Also, it is important in *bhakti*, which is an affair of the heart, that the word or the symbol is the door that is used to get beyond this division, to the realm of union that door must attract us, not repel us. One should like it, one should feel attracted to it.

This is a *sūtra* in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*:

yathā abhimata dhyānād vā (1.39):

„You meditate upon anything you like." You can choose your own object of meditation, an object which you like. If you do not like it, you are put off right from the beginning, and then the mind doesn't think of it at all. Kṛṣṇa echoes that teaching in the *Gītā*:

yo-yo yāṁ-yāṁ tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śraddhayā 'rcitum iccḥati (7.21).

„Whatever the form that the devotee wants to worship or loves to worship, that he can choose." There's total freedom here. But there must be love, the mind must, the heart must naturally flow towards that object of devotion. Otherwise, there is trouble.

Incidentally, both these lovely names you have heard again and again, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, both mean exactly the same thing. *Rāma*, the word, means *that which delights the heart*, in which the heart loves to rest, which makes you happy. *Kṛṣṇa* again means *that which attracts you powerfully, in spite of yourself*.

There is also a lovely contradiction in that word *kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa* also means *that which rubs you*, like a rough stone on which you rub, so that you are cleaned. That may not be very pleasant. On the one hand, there is the pleasant and the beauty that attracts you, and on the other, it rubs you and chastens you. Both these things are there together in that name Kṛṣṇa.

But what we are concerned with here now is the attraction. The object that the devotee chooses must be something which attracts his heart and his attention, otherwise one can choose any object one likes. The fun here is: cosmic consciousness being present everywhere can be reached anywhere, in any form. That which is everywhere, is present, is here. When you see it there, you see it everywhere.

Now, we come to another risky step. Let's say this statue is made of what they call *pañcaloha,* the *five metals*: gold, silver, copper, iron and brass. You are worshipping God, not the statue, so that if somebody steals the statue for the worth of the metal in it, you shouldn't go into mourning: God doesn't die. Again, there is this division and cohesion. I can choose to worship anything I like, but: for the sake of God. Even so, I can worship a person, a tree – anything. What do we worship, what do we adore? God. How is that God different from me?

Why is this me so base? Because it is egoistic. And why do I worship that statue? Because the statue has no ego at all. So once again, we are coming back to our theory of evolution. That is not stated so in *bhakti* yoga, but that is my inference: you start from the human level, but eventually you must come round this spiral experience, and here it is not so much a spiral as concentric circles. If you throw a stone into a swimming pool, this gives rise to concentric circles. The vision should expand in concentric circles without ever getting lost.

How does that happen? The procedure is given in the tenth chapter of the *Gītā*. As your consciousness begins to expand, watch your steps very carefully and realize the presence of God in what the mind does not doubt. Ask yourself: „What is it that appeals to me as divine, without a shadow of doubt?" Start from there. Then let the understanding or the consciousness expand in concentric circles, including a little more, expanding a little more – but don't get lost! Don't say that this is the divine and all else is un-divine! Don't say that „my Kṛṣṇa, this statue alone is God, and all the rest is nonsense". Then you're stuck, you're lost.

Without getting lost, can the consciousness expand in concentric circles, gently, slowly? Take for instance the cross, or a picture of Kṛṣṇa or Buddha. The mind has been conditioned to accept it already as something divine. Even if you are a real atheist, you'd still not trample upon a crucifix. So here is no doubt at all. The mind readily accepts, the heart readily accepts it as something divine. Take it. It may be different for different people. It may be a statue for some, a scripture to some others, or a flower for somebody else. That is not universal. Start from your own point! Don't accept somebody else's starting point – you will fail.

Look within and see: what is it that inspires my heart? What is it that uplifts my heart? Whereas there is the holy cow in India, there is a holy camel in Arabia and there is a holy dog in New York. So, start from where you want to start, don't jump on somebody else's shoulders. That's useless. What does my mind accept without question, without doubt, as something holy? As I look at that, I'm reminded of something superhuman, something out of this world.

Then you go from there, take one round to include all the things that are also connected with it. For instance, you learned to admire a lotus. Now, whenever you see a lotus, you are thrilled. You see God in

that. Then you look at other wildflowers and you notice that they are also as beautiful as the lotus. The consciousness is slowly expanding a little more, a little bit more. Then you see some nice faces that also look like lotus. This is another type of flower! You learn to see God in these. So, slowly that circle expands. To begin with, the heart associates *divine* with something which is pure – means: there is something which is impure that has to be rejected.

Even here the mind functions, and the mind goes in front. Like the ship, the mind plows through and it says: „This is very beautiful, this is really divine! That? No, ugly." Right, keep it there! There's no struggle in all of this. If you think that only this is divine and that is not divine, keep it there! With what is not divine you have no business, leave it alone.

As you go on, the concentric circle keeps expanding. You come round, you learn to look at that, you learn to look at this, you learn to look at what is divine, you learn to look at something you previously considered as un-divine and see something good in it. Slowly, you add one portion of it to this divine: „Her behavior is not all that correct, but never mind." Add a little bit of it to this divine. And turned round and round, I identify: „My God, she is marvelous!" Then you are ready to say that everybody and everything is divine, you are ready to see, to experience the presence of the same intelligence in all.

Gradually the concentric circle keeps on expanding, but without forcing. When you are forcing, you are creating a rebellion within yourself. If I force myself to do something, I'm not doing what I could be doing at that time, and I'm not doing what I'm forcing myself to do. I'm not there, only the body is there, so it's a waste of time. As the consciousness keeps expanding, you will find that it will naturally include what was once rejected in its own childish ignorance. In *bhakti* therefore one can use any object to pour one's heart's adoration.

The *bhakta* – who practices *bhakti* – contemplates the cosmic personality in a manner described in a hymn in the *Veda*:

sahasra-śīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasra-pāt.

This is from the *Ṛg-Veda* (10.090.01a): „That supreme person" – supreme person: nameless, formless, but person – „has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet."

Sa bhūmiṃ viśvato vṛtvā atyatiṣṭhad daśāṅgulam (10.090.01c):

„That person fills the whole universe, but is not limited by it, and extends beyond it on all sides by ten inches." *Atyatiṣṭhad daśāṅgulam* – ten inches all around! Why ten inches? Infinity plus twelve is the same as infinity plus 1,200. Once you stretch something beyond the universe, what does it matter if it is ten inches or 100 inches?

Sa bhūmiṃ viśvato vṛtvā atyatiṣṭhad daśāṅgulam
puruṣa evedaṁ sarvaṁ yad bhūtaṁ yac ca bhavyam (10.7.90.2a).

„All this that you see here is the *puruṣa*", is that person – all that, everything, everything, everything. *Yad bhūtaṁ yac ca bhavyam*: „That which has been and that which may be in the future" – past, present and future. Whatever there is, it's all that. And then:

pādo' sya viśvā bhūtāni tripād asyāmṛtaṃ divi (10.7.90.3c)

„The whole universe is just one-fourth of this being. The rest is beyond." Then the description goes on: the sun and the moon are the eyes, the space is the abdomen, all the stars are the hair – a very beautiful description. That is possible. Thus, one possibility is to visualize the entire universe as the body of the cosmic being. This is one form of *bhakti*. Probably we are tempted to call it the *highest*, but there is no highest or lowest here. Where you are, what you are able to do, is the highest.

This cosmic being is omnipresent and omnipotent. It is that cosmic being that is manifest here, as all of us. All of us are, in a manner of speaking, *avatāra*, *incarnation*; incarnation in the sense of *being embodied*. It's a bit difficult to see God, the divine embodiment, in your neighbor. So, I accept the possibility of divine embodiment or incarnation, but then I still want to see that incarnation as something different from the ordinary order of humanity. Therefore, I chose the the ideal embodied person and call him an *avatāra.*

This *avatāra*-concept is found in the scriptures also. In the *Gītā* it is specifically stated:

yadā-yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadā 'tmānaṁ sṛjāṁy ahaṁ (4.7):

„Whenever the balance between righteousness and unrighteousness is disturbed here, I incarnate myself."

It's also possible for me to pick up an example, the exceptional person, an embodied human being, whether it is present or past, and worship that personality as an incarnation of God. That's also acceptable. In order that we may not get stuck in the feeling that such embodiment is possible only on the human plane, the scriptures describe such incarnations as having taken place in all species. So again, as I enter into the concept of incarnation, there must be an expansion. I must learn to see that not only Kṛṣṇa was an incarnation, but there could have been millions of incarnations everywhere.

Gradually, the vision expands. And then you find Kṛṣṇa describing: „I am the sun. I am the moon. I am the Himalaya among the mountains." But if you are not seeing the Himalaya, what do you do? This is the Himalaya for you! If you are not seeing the Ganges, this is the Ganges for you. Gradually, the vision begins to expand, and you begin to see the divine manifest everywhere.

Yad-yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā
tat-tad evā 'vagaccha tvaṁ mama tejoṁ 'śasaṁbhavaṁ (*BhG* 10.41).

Whatever there is that is beautiful, powerful, glorious, is a manifestation of God: see God in it. It's the same here — a division, and then a harmony behind. There's a little prejudice that what I considered as beauty is beauty, and what I considered as ugliness was ugliness, but then I realize that someone regards even that as beauty, and therefore there is God, there is the divine. And so, these walls become crumbled, gradually, little by little. Who am I to determine that this shall be beauty and all the rest is ugliness? Why do I not see that there are people who adore that as beautiful, as powerful, as glorious, as divine? All the differences and distinctions gradually fade away.

The progressive, concentric expansion of consciousness, which at the same time creates a division and then brings it all together, asks us to be aware of each other and then enables us to see God in one another: that is the *bhakti* yoga concept of God.

4 The Spiral of Love

There is a suggestion in the text that forms the basis of our description of *bhakti* yoga, the *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras*, that *bhakti* or devotion is somehow superior to the other forms of yoga like *karma* yoga, *rāja* yoga, or even *jñāna* yoga. The orthodox Indian yogi always carries some salt in his pocket. Whenever there is such a statement, he sprinkles it with quite plenty of it!

In the orthodox tradition, there is a literal device known as *arthavāda*. *Arthavāda* means *glorifying something for the sake of glorifying it*. You will find this everywhere in India. For instance, everyone would say that his guru is the supreme. Or take the poetic compositions of a saint who visits several holy places, and wherever he goes, he says: „This is the supreme place on earth!" You've said that in Jerusalem some time ago, then you come to Rome, and you say the same thing: „This is the supreme place!"

When you are writing a book on *bhakti*, naturally you must glorify it above all else. You should either not compare it with anything else – that's not possible, because the human mind is prone to compare – or you must say that this is the best place, above the others. The *Bhāgavataṁ* says that if you read this book, heavens will open to you, and if you don't read the book, you're going to hell. That's not quite true! It's a form of literal device which is meant to enhance your zeal, so that you apply yourself with your heart and soul to it. When someone says: „*Oṁ* is the greatest mantra", you're totally immersed in it.

When you study the *Bhakti Sūtras*, you may be made to feel that this is the supreme thing, you don't have to bother about meditation, you don't have to bother about *karma* yoga; do *bhakti*, that'll do. But the author gives one interesting argument why he considers *bhakti* to be supreme:

> *anyasmāt saulabhyam bhaktau* (58).

For one thing, it is easier than the others: *anyasmāt saulabhyam bhaktau*, it is easily accomplished. Love, love of God, is more easily accomplished than the other methods. Love is inherent in all. You may or may not be terribly dynamic, you may or may not have a charismatic personality, you may or may not have the discipline of the mind to practice meditation, but love seems to be common to everybody. Since it is common, universal, it is something that is easily accomplished. And not only that:

> *pramāna antarasya anapekṣatvāt svayam pramānatvāt* (59).

So many questions arise when you think in terms of *karma* yoga, when you think in terms of meditation and the inquiry of the I: am I doing it rightly or wrongly? Am I going along the right track or the wrong track? Because we are all the time roaming in the region of the unknown. Here, he says that we don't need anybody else's comment to know that there is love in my heart. You are full of it, you are bubbling, you are bursting: love is its own proof. You know when love exists in your heart. Get hold of it and chew it, experience it. Make it real! That is what it means to realize love.

Why is this insisted upon? Because most of the time we pass through the experience without experiencing it, because the attention is outside. Though I say, „I love you", I don't know what's

happening in me, I'm not watching. Because here is a limited love. I turn around and I see another person whom I hate. So, this precious experience which could have acted as a key to open the chambers of God-love has slipped through my fingers: I've missed it.

In some kind of love-relationship you lose yourself completely and you are in bliss, and that is a supreme experience, a marvelous experience. But in our case, it passed unnoticed. I want to notice it. When I notice it, I naturally create a division between me and the experience. Once I have created that experience, once I have tasted it, I cultivate a taste for that experience, I know what it is. If I know what that love is, it is possible that I can cultivate the same attitude towards everything. Then the division has gone! The boat has passed through.

I see that love is so delightful, so beautiful, and now I know how the other thing is painful. When the mind has experienced the taste of that love, it doesn't go and fall into ill-will. As the devotee says in a very beautiful poem in Sanskrit (*Stotra Ratna*, 24), addressed to God: „I am devoted to you, I love your lotus feet. The self is totally immersed in that love. How does it long for anything else in this world? When there is a blooming lotus, full of nectar, full of honey, the bee goes straight to that. If there is some silly flower opening, it doesn't even look at it!" It's full of nectar, it's full of honey. When that experience is not there, when that realization is not there, when that love is not there, we run after all these other things. When that is there, who is going to care for this?

I must consciously experience this love, whatever be its form. Whenever the heart experiences this love, I must become conscious of it, aware of it, so I know: this is love. And this is where I'm completely dissolved, and therefore there is no anxiety, there is no worry, there is no fear, nothing! It is complete and total – God. So, in *bhakti* it is said: get hold of that single love experience. Never mind where you found it. It is easily achieved, because it is easily experienced, and the experience is its own proof.

We all love some things in the world, but I think we also know by the same token that this is the purest form of love that I have experienced, without hurting or fear of being hurt. Let's say that you experience it when you are holding your baby. That is *vatsalya*, the caring attitude towards God as between a parent and a child.

When a loving parent criticizes you, you've got to try to feel delighted! Who will be critical of you, who will criticize what you do? Someone who cares for you, isn't it? That love is called *dāsya bhakti*. That love is able to see God in that master, and then see God as the master: first I must see God in the master whom I've served, and then I'll be able to see God himself as my master, with the result that from there on, the entire universe becomes your master. Then, and only then, is true humility possible.

It is not only Swami Sivananda. In him I saw my master whom I love and whom I adored and whom I served. Then you turn around and see: God is my master. I served the master, the God in him, and therefore God is my master. God is omnipresent, God is everywhere, and so you serve all, anybody, anyone, with the same devotion, with the same love! So again, you have a sample experience, and you become aware of it, you taste it, you realize its sweetness – there is no need for you to discuss it with anybody else. It's purely personal.

Bhakti is therefore an entirely personal adventure, the soul's own adventure. And it needs no proof, it's its own proof, self-validated. I love the master, I love the God in the master, and I love God as my master, and God is omnipresent, so I love all as my master – these are the steps. Again it expands. You have learned to love one intensely, deeply, naturally in a limited way, and there, in the depth of that person's being, in the depth of that experience, you experience God, the indwelling essence. If you don't want to use the word *God* in that relationship, you go right down to the indwelling presence, deep within, in the very being of the person, of you, yourself. Once that is had, you can turn round and it keeps expanding, keeps expanding.

In the Indian story called *Rāmāyaṇa*, there is a personality called Hanumān. In Indian mythology, this Hanumān is supposed to have been a monkey. That monkey was tremendously devoted to Rāma, as a servant. Rāma is considered an incarnation of God, and Hanumān was supposed to be the son of the wind God. Compared to the incarnation of God, this is small fry.

You know that monkeys are very destructive. As a monkey, sometimes he was prone to be destructive. It is said that he destroyed a pleasure grove, a garden, in a few minutes. But as a servant of Rāma, the story says that he was capable of almost impossible feats. He could lift a mountain, jump over a wide expanse of ocean, and do fantastic things which even this God incarnated as Rāma could not do. That's the fun! Rāma could not cross the ocean, it was only the monkey that could leap over the ocean. Rāma could not lift a mountain, it was only the monkey that could lift a mountain.

What is the message there? Hanumān was the son of the wind. In English, it's a simple thing: if you turn the first letter of the word *wind* upside down, it becomes *mind*. So, *mind* and *wind* are interchangeable. That is why they also say that the mind is as difficult to control as the wind is. You cannot gather up all the wind and put it in your handbag. Even so, you cannot restrain your mind from flowing out. But when can the activities of the mind be controlled, be restrained, made fruitful, divine? When Hanumān became the servant of Rāma, he was wonderful! Even so, if this mind may be made to serve God, as God-servant, then the same mind works wonders. That's marvelous! It works wonders even greater than God – that's the idea.

When the mind and the heart become the servant of the lord, and when you see that you are the servant of God, God being omnipresent, then there is absolutely nothing that you cannot achieve. You don't have a porcupine's personality, which sizzles every time somebody comes near. You're an easy mixer because you are able to see God in all. God is your master, and therefore, you can adapt yourself by regarding yourself as the servant of all. You don't come into conflict with anybody else. Thus, one is able to achieve a lot.

Another form of love is *sākhya,* friendship. Even the orthodox commentators of the scripture are cautious about it. There have been a few in religious history who have treated God as a friend. Friendship is two-way traffic, whereas being a servant is one-way traffic: you command me, I'll do it. If I am your friend, I ask you to do something for me sometimes, and you can ask me to do you a favor sometimes. There have been a few examples of such friendliness towards God, and commentators usually warn people: „Don't take it too seriously!"

One example given is that of Arjuna, the disciple of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. He treated Kṛṣṇa as his friend so that he would even say: „Hey, drive my car, become my chauffeur! God almighty – well, never mind. You are my friend, come on!"

Kṛṣṇa had a sister, called Subhadrā, and Arjuna was fond of her. She was also fond of Arjuna. But Kṛṣṇa had an elder brother who wanted to marry her off to somebody else. She was miserable and Arjuna was also miserable when he heard that. Arjuna went to Kṛṣṇa and said: „Your brother wants to marry your sister to your enemy. Both of us will perish!"

It is said that Kṛṣṇa suggested: „Become a swami, a *saṁnyasin*; that's the best thing to do." But then, it was a trick! This Arjuna became a swami, for the time being. He put on these clothes and went to the village where the girl lived. There he was sitting at the bank of the river. Kṛṣṇa's elder brother was very devoted to the swamis and holy men. When he saw this man sitting there under a tree, he said: „Who are you? Come and stay with me." He agreed, a little reluctantly. and went to stay with the brother of Subhadrā. Then one fine morning, they both eloped! Arjuna treated Kṛṣṇa as a friend, so he could ask him to do whatever he wanted. We use friendship, and instead of spontaneously helping one another, the moment you become my friend, the only thing that is in my mind is how to use you. Because there is that unfortunate twist in the relationship as friend, they say: „Be careful!"

The last is *mādhurya*, the lover-beloved relationship, which is obvious, I think. God is my lover, God is my beloved – and one should be devoted to this God as the lover. So, it must divide to ensure that all the devotion is to the God in the other person, to the God that is omnipresent, not to the flesh, which is not omnipresent.

I'm giving you an example just to show you that this is not rather crazy Oriental stuff. If you study the biography of Saint Catherine of Siena, you'll find almost exactly that pattern there. It is said that she had a vision of Jesus, and this Jesus came right down onto the earth and married her and gave her a ring. And it is said that the ring was a real ring! She became married to Jesus Christ, the bride of Jesus Christ.

5 Love and Anguish

The explanation concerning this creation, that it is the division which came into being in this cosmic consciousness in order that the cosmic being might experience its own bliss, has another facet to it: God made this world in order to realize his own potentialities. God's realization of his own power, his own bliss, *is* the world. That's the explanation. How far it is true we don't know. That being so, every created being is constantly looking for that happiness, and in that process, every being is constantly looking for that experience of love, manifesting that experience of love.

That's quite simple: if God is omnipresent and God is love, this love is everywhere. It is that divine love which is manifest in all relationships. All personalized love-relationship, being finite, is therefore accompanied by its antithesis, the positive and the negative, so that if I love you, there is naturally some non-love on the other side.

So, if you find non-love in some relationship, it is because you are looking at the wrong side. You are looking at the behavior of a murderer and you see hate in him. Why is it so? Because you are seeing his attitude towards his victim. Look at the other side! Why is he murdering this person or plundering that person? Because he wants to feed the other one. He has got his wife and children whom he loves! Instead of looking here, look there and you see that he is a very loving person, he is a wonderful man.

There is love everywhere in the universe, and it is this love that is manifest as this universe, as all these relationships. But caught up in this division, caught up in finite living, finite expression, it becomes imperfect – imperfect in the sense that it is not full, it is not total. Total love is possible only in God or in cosmic consciousness when *you* does not exist.

One becomes aware of this love in human relationship as expressed and experienced between friends, between master and servant, between parent and child, between lovers, or in a meditative way. When you experience it, you are still experiencing this love in a very partial, limited way. Limited way is not supreme love. Therefore, Nārada defines – aha, defines! – *bhakti* as:

> *sā tvasmin parama prema rūpā* (2).

It is not only love, but *supreme* love.

Is there a thing called *supreme love*? No. But because we are familiar in human relationship with a love which has an antithesis in a cold indifference, hate or dislike, you have to call that *supreme love*. We have unfortunately used the word *love* in very questionable situations, and because we have misused this word, this concept, we characterize divine love as supreme love, as something exceptional: it's not like this, it is not that which has an antithesis in itself, it's not that which is divided in itself. That which is not divided at all, that is cosmic love or divine love or supreme love: *parama prema rūpā*.

That alone is seen in all this. You go to the lake, pick up a bucket of water: it is the lake-water. That's not the totality of the lake-water – there's a lot more there! Still even that is water from the lake. Every wave of the lake is the lake, but it is not the totality of the lake. The love that people have for one another is also love. However, it is limited, it is conditioned, it is finite, and therefore it is not the totality.

It is the same love, which is God, which is of God, that is manifest in all this, not only as love in humans, but also as the power of gravitation, magnetism – all these are also part of the love that sustains the entire universe. We shouldn't make the fatal error of saying that only we are capable of love. It's there, everywhere, throughout the cosmos. But in its manifestation in individuals it is limited, it is conditioned, and therefore one visualizes an uninterrupted supreme state for this: *sā tvasmin parama prema rūpā*.

How do I recognize what is this supreme love? I've learned to recognize when the heart is in a state of love, and I've learned to recognize when that is absent from the heart. When this love in the heart is uninterrupted, that is obviously perfection. When this love is uninterrupted, obviously, there is perfection.

Yaj jñātvā manātmārāmo bhavati (6):

„The mind is steady", and *ātmārāmo bhavati*: „There is an experience of unbroken happiness, joy, bliss." Because the love is unbroken, the consequence, which is bliss, is also unbroken, and that's why Nārada again says that:

phala rūpatvāt (26),

„You can recognize it by its fruit." This is the same as what Jesus is supposed to have said (*Matthew* 7:16). How do you recognize love? You know it within yourself, because when that love prevails in the heart, then there is happiness, there is joy, there is bliss. When the love is uninterrupted, the bliss is also uninterrupted.

One who is established in supreme love is … There is no word for it. It's not exactly *self-satisfied*. The expression *ātmārāma* means almost *narcisstic* – almost, except that it is used in a spiritual sense. It is explained in another *sūtra*:

yat prāpya na kiñcid vāñchati (5).

„Having gained this, it doesn't crave for anything else." It doesn't long for anything else, it doesn't desire anything else, it doesn't crave for anything else. He realizes: what has to be will be. He realizes that this tree started blossoming, not because he went to fanning or painting it, but they know when to blossom, they know when to yield the fruits.

There is this intelligence in the whole universe there. It's provided; that's why it's called *providence*. A young devotee whose story I've crossed in the *Bhāgavataṁ* (see 7.6) has something very interesting to say to his own schoolmates. He says that there`s some foolishness in thinking one must work very hard in order to make a living. Why so? Nobody wants to be sick, and yet people become sick. Nobody wants to be poor, and yet people become poor. Nobody wants a bad name, dishonor, and dishonor comes to them. Dishonor, pain, suffering, illness, sickness, poverty – all these things come unsought. Nobody works for these. He asks a very simple question: „What makes you think that in the same way health, prosperity, honor, happiness also would not come to you, unsought?"

It's a question which we have not often asked ourselves. It doesn't mean that I sit idle and let happen everything – no! There is energy in this body – let it move, let it work, but not motivated by a desire to

be happy, healthy, or to be prosperous, or to be honored. We should make a distinction between letting the body, the mind, and the personality function and putting an effort into it. I can live a natural life, and in that natural life itself there is health, there is happiness, there is prosperity – everything. Whatever has to be will be. If you enter into the spirit, it's not fatalistic.

The day dawned not because you and I banged our heads against the wall, the day dawned because the day dawned! How much you and I may resist it, and will against it and pray against it, and do headstand against it, it will still be night in three hours' time. You cannot prevent the one, you cannot promote the one, so that if you live your life, what has to happen will happen. In that life, there is no craving. There is self-satisfaction, *ātmārāma*. It is not a rejection, but a peacefully inquiring approach to life.

When I experience this love, I begin to wonder: where does it happen? It doesn't take very long to realize that when I love you, I do not experience the love in you. It looks as though it is experienced in me. Therefore, it is usual to say that this love exists in me, in my heart. But there is a delightful expression in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* – I've come across this only in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, nowhere else:

Deśa deśantra prato tanmadhye saṁvidham vīḍuḥ vīḍuḥ (6.2.171).

„Between this and that, consciousness is in the middle." It's a beautiful expression: it is neither here nor there. When there is an experience of love, it is neither in me nor in you, it is somewhere in between. Look for it in *I love you*!

So, I do not presume that you are the object of my love. You are not necessary at all for it, and I don't even presume that the love is in me: „I'm such a nice person, you know I am very loving." Love is as if it were floating everywhere. I am as much a sacrifice to it as you. You and I are merely two ends of the handkerchief, but neither this end exists, nor that end exists – only the handkerchief exists. In that relationship, this love became manifest. But it is neither in me nor in you – it is there. A beautiful concept which appears again and again in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*: don't look for this in you, don't look for this outside, in the other person, but somewhere in between, somewhere in between.

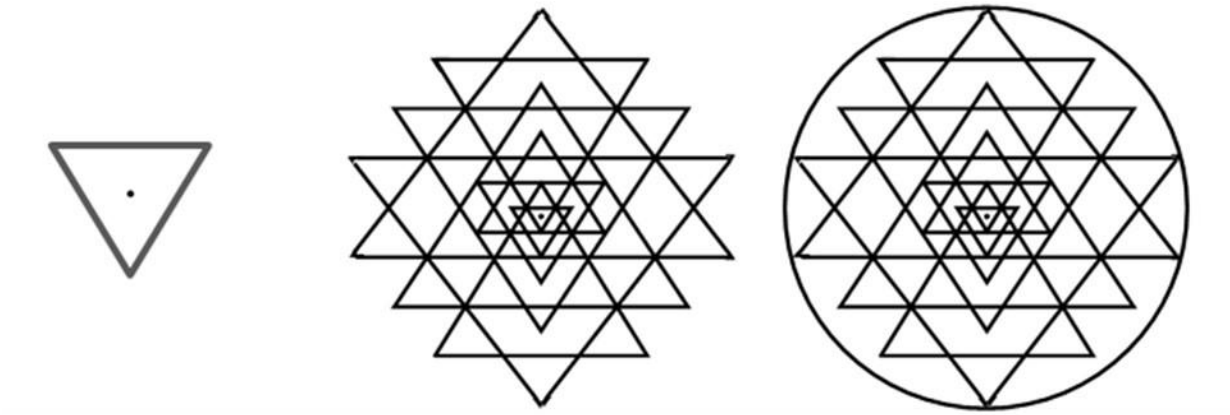
How does one define this divine love? If you understood that far, the next one becomes fairly easy. Nārada, the author of the *Bhakti Sūtras*, has got a delightful definition:

Nāradas tu tadarpitākhilācāratā ākhilācāratā tadvismaraṇe paramavyākulateti (19).

He says: „There are so many teachers that define this divine love in various ways. But if you ask me, it is *tadarpitākhilācāratā*", which means: „that state of mind in which all your actions are directed towards that," offered to that, directed towards that. *That* here may mean the cosmic being or the cosmic love, both being indistinguishably one. It's not a personalized God or an anthropomorphic figure, but it is that – that which is God, that which is love, that God is love. All one's actions put an effort to that, are directed to that, sacrificed to that.

This is one characteristic: that state of mind in which all actions are treated as sacrifice or worship, so that it is not a dull and reclusive affair. „Everything and all": he doesn't even distinguish between right action and wrong action. *Akhilācāratā*: „whatever the devotee does" is an offering to this omnipresent

being. *Karma* yoga flows into *bhakti* yoga and *bhakti* yoga flows into *karma* yoga – it's all one! I don't know why we often make this arbitrary division.



From bindu to sri yantra

There is another *sūtra* where he defines *bhakti* as *lokevedavyāpāranyāsaḥ* (8). How does the devotee behave? What does he do? *Lokevedavyāpāranyāsaḥ*. *Loka* is *the world*, *veda* is *religious*, *vyāpārana* is *activity*. The word *nyāsa* is often translated as *renunciation: saṁnyāsa*. So, many have translated that he renounces all worldly and religious activities. It may not mean that. *Nyāsa* is also *to place*: he gives worldly activities and religious performances the value that is inherent in them! Not more and not less.

Must I eat? Yes, I must eat. If you are hungry, go and eat. Finished – that chapter is closed. Don't think about this like all the wonderful dietitians do. Don't go on meditating about food for the 24 hours of the day: how many calories must I eat and so on. Food is necessary, so let the body eat and maintain the body. In the same way, there are some religious performances. Go on, if you feel the need for them, perform them. There may be a psychological need to perform some kind of ceremony. Go, do it! Eating has become a ritual: you must sit here, and you must hold a knife in your right hand and a fork in your left. That's a ritual. If this ritual gives you some satisfaction – go ahead, no harm in it. In the same way some other ritual, called *religious* ritual, gives you some satisfaction? Go on, do it.

Again, I've read this in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*: one must sustain the body, there's no harm in it, earn to sustain your body. Why must I sustain the body? In order that I may acquire knowledge. What sort of knowledge must I acquire? The one that will liberate you. So, if all these are directed towards freedom, liberation, then all these become valuable. I don't earn money in order to earn money, I don't maintain the body to maintain the body, treating that as a goal in itself. All these things have their value in the context of liberation – *tadarpitākhilācāratā* – so that all the activities that one engages oneself in have this one aim of discovering this love, divine love, cosmic love.

Another concept occurs:

> *Tadvismaraṇe paramavyākulateti* (19).

I experience this love and it gives me supreme satisfaction, supreme happiness. And I also experience its antithesis, and that makes me shudder.

If the mind has really and truly tasted this love, then it naturally flows along that side. When there arises within oneself a negative feeling – a feeling of jealousy, a feeling of hate, a feeling of anger, a feeling of ill-will – then one experiences not the same happiness, not the same joy, not the same peace; the mind is disturbed and there is intense anguish. That intense anguish is interpreted in the text as *viraha* or *parama vyākulatā*. *Tadvismaraṇe* is when the psychological contact with that – God, *bhakti*, love – is lost. *Vismaraṇa* may also mean *forgetfulness, non-remembering*.

What is to *remember*? A member of our community resigned, he went away, then he re-membered and joined again, he became a member once again. In this consciousness, God, this love or *bhakti* was a member, and suddenly he resigned: there was an absence of psychological contact with this love or with God, and in that absence of psychological contact, there is tremendous, terrible anguish. Because when love is absent, its opposite seems to be present. There cannot be two realities, love and its opposite. But in the non-remembering of this love, its opposite seems to be present, and that itself creates tremendous anguish. That is known as *viraha* in *bhakti* literature.

If you ask Jewish scholars, they will tell you that the famous expression: „Lord, why have you forsaken me?" that Jesus is supposed to have said while hanging on the cross is the first line of a song, a very popular song: *Eli lama sabachtani* (*Matthew* 27:46, *Mark* 15:34, *Psalms* 22:2). They say that he didn't feel forsaken, but that he was merely chanting a lovely hymn, standing on the cross.

However: why does that prayer exist? Why should some prophets, or devotees, or mystics have found it necessary to shout: „Oh God, why have you forsaken me?" That is when there is the resignation of the membership – an apparent resignation of the membership, apparent non-remembering. It's not real! God, or love, is omnipresent, but somehow there is an illusionary idea, a notion within oneself, that that contact has been severed.

So, in that state when there is non-remembering, the devotee feels intense anguish. You feel like a fish out of water. The fish also breathes oxygen and lives. Oxygen is there everywhere, and yet is absent! It is not so that oxygen is absent and therefore the fish is struggling. Even though oxygen is outside and inside the water, the fish is so conditioned that he can inhale the oxygen only in the water. When it is taken out, it is restless, it's filled with anguish.

These are the main characteristics of divine love: the devotee's whole life is directed towards the divine, directed to the discovery of this divine love, all his actions are treated as sacrifice or worship of the divine or the divine love, and when this constant contact with the divine love or with the divine seems to be lost, *seems* to be lost, there is intense anguish. As the devotee progresses in his *bhakti* or devotion, he feels this more and more intensely. This is a paradox again! The worldly man does not experience as much of anguish as the highly advanced devotee experiences.

That, again, is the Oriental explanation of Jesus' anguish on the cross: it is only when you are very close to the other shore that you feel the greatest of anguish even at the least non-remembrance. The worldly

man practically never remembers, he's never in a knowing contact with this divine love, so it’s all right! In his case, the anguish doesn’t exist at all. He feels happy when he feels love in his heart, but its absence is not seriously noticed.

But as the heart becomes purer and purer, and as the love is experienced more and more frequently, it is missed more and more intensely. When the devotee is very close to the goal, to the experience of unconditioned, unlimited love, even a moment's non-remembrance of that is felt as tremendous pain, anguish. It is a pain that brings about the total absorption in the divine love.

6 The Use of Symbols

A specialty of *bhakti* is the use of symbols. Whether Oriental or Occidental, throughout the world we have used some kind of symbol to remind ourselves of the object of contemplation: God, cosmic consciousness, cosmic being, supreme bliss. Even in the pre-historic Middle East they used a monolithic stone pillar to represent God. Is it necessary? No. Is it helpful? Yes. It is not indispensable. One can do without it. And since that time, people have struggled to get away from it. They abolish one thing, and immediately they get into something new.

I need a symbol! I need to look at what I am contemplating. Before I can learn how to look within, I must learn how to look! If I don't know how to love someone whom I can touch, whom I can feel, whom I can smell, whom I can taste – how do I know what it is to love at all if I don't know what it is to love, and what it is to communicate, commune with someone and learn the essence there? I must learn to love, but learn to love the essence. I must learn to communicate, but learn to communicate with the essence, not just the form.

So, start from the form and get into the essence. This has been the approach of all mystics. Start with the form, and from the form, with the help of the form, with the use of the form, get into the essence. Don't stop with the form, but on the other hand, don't try to jump right into the essence unless you are capable of doing so.

It is said that the Buddha, without any intermediate, without any auditor, without anybody's help was able to go right through the series of his own past incarnations. He was not interested in getting rid of fear, in getting rid of jealousy, but he was interested in finding the root cause of the problem of birth and death, of the whole cycle of re-incarnation. What is it that compels me to embody myself? What is it that gives rise to this personality? He went right back, and he eventually came to this ageless, beginningless ignorance. Suddenly the whole thing falls away, and he says: „I've found out the truth. From there on, there should be no more embodiment."

It's possible for a Buddha. But if you suddenly have a grandiose illusion that you are also a Buddha, then try – good luck! Sit down under the tree. You have seen some pictures where Buddha is patting the earth. That was the moment when he took a vow: „Till I reach enlightenment I will not get up from this seat." You may try that! That may last for about two hours for you, at maximum, if you are a very strong-willed person. We are not Buddhas, we are not Ramana Maharshi! So, it's rather tricky to bring in the example of all those who said: „Intermediates are unnecessary, one must be able to look straight into the essence, into the truth." My guru had a very simple and beautiful attitude: „He doesn't need an image? That's very good, God bless him!" If he says: „Sit and meditate *Oṁ tat sat,*" and I come and tell him: „Guruji, it doesn't seem to be possible. May I have a picture of *Oṁ*?" he says: „Okay, alright." „Guruji, even that is a bit impersonal. May I keep your picture in front of it?" And he says: „Alright." I am on a certain level, and this is good for me, and you are on a certain other level, and that is good for you.

As I said right in the beginning, this is the crux of the whole of *bhakti*, that you are allowed to use any symbol you like, any object you like. I even know of one family in Ceylon whose only God was their own

father. They had an enormous, twice life-size portrait of him in their *pūjā*-room. They used to meditate upon the picture of the father, worship the father – why not, what's wrong with that?

It may be distracting. If you are sincere and if you are earnest, you realize when it becomes a distraction. That which strengthens you in the beginning may strangle you later, if you are not careful. It strengthens you in the beginning, and then it might begin to strangle you, even love and human affection. Only your own sensitivity is going to tell you when it is a strengthening aid, which I need, and when it has become a strangling obstacle which should drop away now. Nobody else can help me here. When I need strengthening, I use the symbol, I use the technique. I watch it all the time, so that it does not become a strangling obstacle. When the need has gone, it drops away.

Why did the pre-historic person use the monolithic stone? To focus his attention. What in India is known as *śivaliṅgam* is but a piece of monolithic stone. The word *liṅgam* means just that: a *symbol*. And it also means a *characteristic symbol* or a distinguishing mark. But then the characteristic symbol of a man is phallus. Therefore, it was extended to cover *phallus*. Suddenly the two became confused, and some people loved it because of that, and some people hated it because of that, hated what has nothing ever to do with it.

All that looks very simple. Some sort of silly idea gets hold of you and doesn't leave you easily. The same monolithic stone is a *liṅgam*, is a visible symbol, is a distinguishing mark on which I can focus my attention, and the attention doesn't waver. I learn to see it outside; I learn what it is to see outside. When I see it outside, I realize that it is not outside. What I'm seeing is not outside. This is the basic factor in what is known as *idol-worship*. Nobody worships an idol; that's silly, stupid. There may be people who are too poor to afford a shrine, and there may not be a temple in easy reach. There are no bathrooms – it's warm, and so we all went to the river or the lake to bathe. After bathing, when we come out, we use to pick up a bit of clay, mold it, put it there, and offer your worship there.

You need something to focus your mind on while you offer your worship or your prayer. When that is finished, sweep the clay back into the river and go on. God doesn't come in it, and God does not die. If God is omnipresent, he is also in a picture. This picture is not God, definitely not God; it's a printed picture. You can see it. But if God is omnipresent, it is here also!

Each one of these symbols that have been handed down are condensed philosophy. One or two I think we can dispose of quickly: I think most of you have seen a picture of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Viṣṇu are all supposed to be blue-colored. Have you ever seen a blue-colored man? No. But all of you have seen something which is naturally blue: the sky. You look up the sky and you see it blue. Then you ask yourself: „What am I seeing? I'm not seeing blue. It's an optical illusion. I see something which does not exist. I see something which is infinite, but which appears to be finite and blue. I see something which is infinite, but which appears to be something blue and seems to have a form." One can meditate upon that, just that.

There is a formula in one of the Upanishads: how do you describe the absolute, the infinite being? How do I meditate upon the infinite being? *Ākāśa sarvagata nitya*: like the sky, all-pervading and eternal. Take

a good look and keep meditating upon the sky, till you realize that what is blue is illusion, and the form is an illusion. When these two disappear, what exists is the truth. If that is simple, you are enlightened already.

There is a lovely couplet which is appearing two or three times in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*:

> *bhrahmasya jāgatasyā 'sya jātasyā 'kaśavarṇavat*
> *apunaḥ smaraṇaṁ manye sādho vismaranaṁ varaṁ* (1.2).

„What is this world? It is an optical illusion, just like the blueness of the sky." You see it, and you know it is not there. Don't let the mind dwell on it. It's an illusion! Don't let the thought of the existence of this world again rise in your mind. If you can do that – congratulations, you've got it. If you cannot do that, if you are not there and if this is too difficult for you, draw a figure, a nice figure, a beautiful figure, and paint it blue.

The figure is attractive, Kṛṣṇa is a beautiful form, and so you sit and meditate upon that form. Slowly, the radiance seems to expand, and you seem to enter in it, and it's gone. You have entered into the blue, like entering into the infinite sky and get one with that. If that is too difficult, come down to the image. Among the *bhakta*s or devotees, some painted images like this, and others, who probably did not like such anthropomorphic figures, invented subtler forms.

We'll dispose of the second first. They are called *tantrik*s and they do diagrams. Later, even these diagrams became more and more complicated, and the *maṇḍala*s arose. The devotees who worshipped forms thought: „We can use the *maṇḍala*s also and fill those squares and petals with human figures." If someone corners me and says: „I don't worship these human forms! I worship a *maṇḍala*!" I can say: „It's the same with me!"

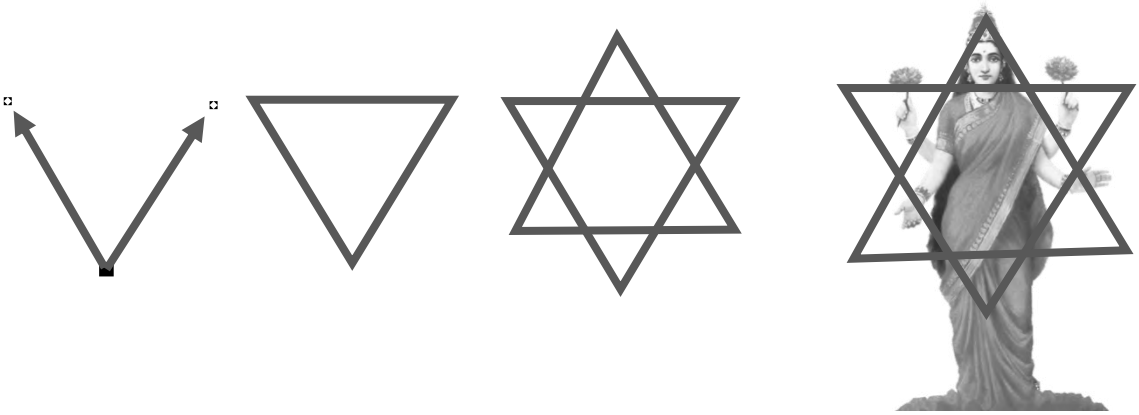
That is infinite, nameless, formless nothing, pure. The philosopher says that in that pure, infinite being there was a *bindu*, a point. This became a triangle, the trinity. The triangle is no more than the trinity: the three basic elements; waking, dreaming, sleeping; the creator, the preserver, and the redeemer; father, son and holy ghost – whatever you want or use to call it. Even this, unfortunately, has come to be regarded as a sex symbol. You can meditate upon that, you can meditate upon *cinmudrā* – this is also the *bindu*, the point of union of thumb and index, and the three other fingers. These three are to be discarded and the *bindu* regarded as that first beginning, the original beginning of the beginning of the beginning.

The triangle points down, and they say: „The divine is falling down and the human is ascending!" We've been discussing this spiral-business: it comes down and gets lost in matter, and then there is evolution, towards the divinity. There is involution of the spirit in matter, and then the matter eventually evolves into the spirit. So, they said there must be a corresponding ascent. That is the famous *Star of David*. It is also the symbol for the heart *cakra*.

So, they say that you raise your energy and your consciousness up to the heart where the divine will come down to help you. The divine does not come down below the heart. Below the heart it's all the

vital principles, life-force; you're caught up in life, in eating, sex and all the rest of it. It's your business to raise your consciousness up to the heart center, and if you are able to do that, from there on the divine takes over.

Probably a simple man or woman suggested that this is a bit too difficult: „An interlaced triangle, a hexagon – and you want me to love it? There's nothing in it for me to love it!" And they said: „Wait, I will help you!" If you fix the head at one corner of the hexagon, and feet and arms in the other corners, then



you've got the whole figure. That is the reason why most of the Indian Hindu Gods have four arms. Instead of directly looking at a hexagon, if you don't feel like it, you can put up a figure and look at it and have the same feeling, the same attitude, the same philosophy.

Figure 10: From the bindu *to the four-armed God*

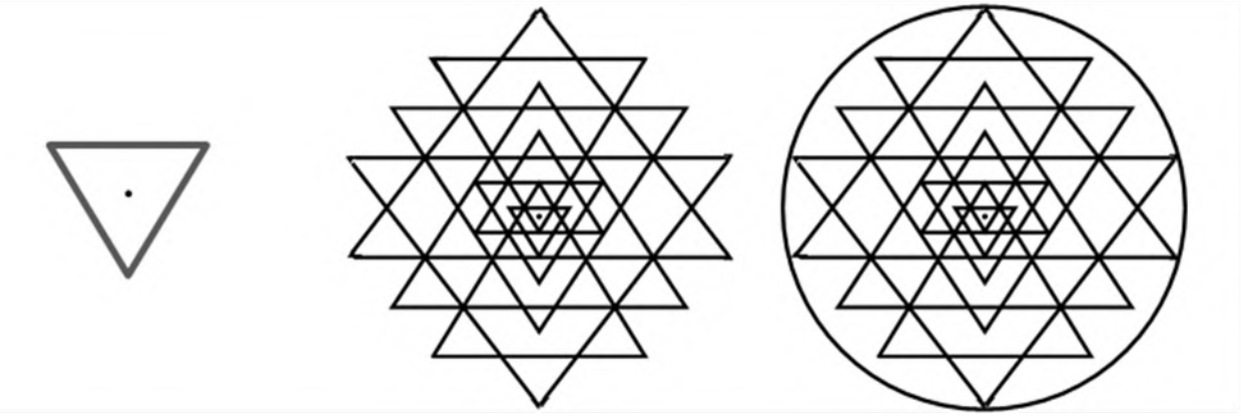
Also, there is a point caught up in the triangle, and the point within the triangle is the beginning of this creation. It is the beginning of what is called the *causal body*, and it gets caught up in the three – all kinds of trinities. All kinds of trinities – including the trinity of father, mother, son.

But then, it doesn't stop with just one triangle – it keeps multiplying. Once the one has become three, the *three plus one and the one plus three* goes on and on and on and on infinitely. And to illustrate that, there are other little *yantra*s. Once again, I am supposed to look at this diagram and contemplate: the

one becomes many. And yet, though the one becomes many, it is still the one. It has never become many.

Figure 11: From the bindu *in the triangle to the* Śrī yantra

One cannot become many. In dream, the one person dreaming can be hundreds and thousands of people, but it is still the one person. The brain has not become many, it is still the same one. When I



understand that principle, it is finished.

Veṅkaṭeśa is said to be an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. They introduced a specialty in this: the eyes are covered. They declare that this is symbolic of a wonderful lesson, a wonderful truth: God doesn't ever, ever, ever get mad at you. God doesn't hate you, God doesn't reject you, God doesn't get angry with you.

If you look at somebody else through the corner of your eyes, you can never frown – try it! You can never frown through the corner of your eyes. Even if you hate me, you can only look with love, no other emotion is possible. When you are looking at someone with the corner of your eyes, you are looking with love. It's not possible otherwise.

So, they said: God never gets angry at you, don't you be afraid. God is love, and he can only love you, whatever you do. It doesn't matter what you are. That's one interesting feature there, and the other is the left hand. The right hand points at the feet – which is the message of Kṛṣṇa, which is the message of Christ: „Come and follow my feet! Surrender, surrender to me!" Kṛṣṇa said so, and the Christ also said so: „Come to me all you that labor." (*Matthew* 11:28)

But then, there is one interesting lesson that is symbolized by the left hand that is holding the thigh. *Dhavanmātram bhavaktim tvameva vejita: „*If you come to me and surrender yourself to me, this ocean of worldly existence will come only up to your thigh-level." You won't drown in it.

Figure 12: Veṅkaṭeśa

There's a lot more in it than it appears on the surface. Let us not expect that you'll have no headache at all! „I have taken refuge to God and he has taken all my …" – no! You will still have to wade through the whole process of existence. It will rise to your thigh-level – don't worry, you won't drown. But don't ask for complete freedom from pain, complete freedom from agony, freedom from sorrow, freedom from illness – no! That's absurd, unrealistic.

It's a beautiful symbol. It enables you to bear what you can bear, knowing that not more is ever given to you. You're never subjected to more pain or more suffering than you can endure, and if you have seen as many people as I have, you also know that you are never given more pleasure than you can stomach. Never. I've never seen one person who has said: „Everything is marvelous with me!" There's always a semicolon there, and then the next word, *but*, starts: „I am in good health, I have plenty of money, *but* …" So, this *but* will always be there – don't worry. Take what comes, and if you are devoted to God, it will come to you only up to the thigh-level. You will never drown.

Gaṇeśa is also a very interesting symbol. There is a belief that one who remembers Gaṇeśa before commencing any auspicious or even worldly activity is blessed with success. If you want success, worship Gaṇeśa first. Marvelous, sounds simple! And then you are asked to bow down and worship a funny figure which has an elephant head and is supposed to have a vehicle, which is a mouse – the whole thing sounds ridiculous.

But then, instead of merely ridiculing it, can I try to understand it? The form appears to be human, and yet I have not seen a human figure with an elephant head. What may it mean? If I begin to probe into it, then I probably understand something more about it. I begin to contemplate – not to understand it with the intellect but know it with the heart. From there, a completely different type of knowledge arises, which is the knowledge of mysticism.

Figure 13: Gaṇeśa

In the ashram, I used to be scared of rats because my room was full of papers: letters to be answered, books and manuscripts, Swami Sivananda's manuscripts and writings, every piece of paper was precious. If I heard some noise, especially during the rainy season, when they leave their holes and want to come into the rooms, I got up, I'd light the lamp to look for it, chase it out, and block all the holes, close all the doors and windows. The mouse seems to be the only animal which bites paper, merely to sharpen its

teeth – or for the pleasure of it, we don't know. Because it doesn't eat paper, it shreds it, leaves it there and goes away.

According to us, those books and papers are the sources of our knowledge. And here is a mouse which comes and destroys this very thing, for no purpose, for no obvious reason. Is there a thing like that in me, too? Is there a psychological factor in me which destroys knowledge for no reason? I can see that, yes: the doubting intellect. The doubting intellects asks: „Why, why, why?", where the question is not relevant. „Why did God create the world?" What does it matter to you? The world is there, leave it to that. „Why must I pray? Why must I meditate?", while it doesn't ask: „Why must I eat?" This is like the mouse chewing paper: *Why, why, why, why* … Without any sense, rhyme, or reason, this goes on all the time. And yet it is not possible to get it and it is not possible to destroy it, and therefore this mouse is not destroyed by the elephant riding on it.

It is not possible to destroy the intellect. Something else has to be done with it in order that this mouse may still be a vehicle. Who is the rider? The elephant. I look at all these human figures and look at this figure of Gaṇeśa. I can see one vital essence. We are capable of three forms of action: mental, verbal, and physical. In our case, the mental action takes place on top, the verbal action a little below, and the physical action far away from these two. Thought takes place in the brain, speech in the mouth – the mouth is not as large as the brain. Then there is a sudden bottleneck, the throat, and a division into two arms and then five fingers, so that a good thought is expressed narrowly, it escapes narrowly.

If you watch your own thoughts, you know you're magnanimous, you're charitable, you're generous – your thoughts are. But even before the magnanimous, generous thoughts are expressed, they're already narrowed down. That's when you're worried about the consequences. When this magnanimous speech comes down into action, half of it is gone in the neck, the rest of it divides into two flows, the arms and then again into ten fingers. By the time this magnanimous thought comes down to action, there is almost nothing left. So, there is this discrepancy between our thought, word, and deed. Therefore, our life is full of hypocrisy. Therefore, we do not succeed. There is no strength. There is no power.

Why do we worship this Gaṇeśa at the beginning of all that we do? In order that we remember this: „I realize the thought, word and deed run into completely different directions. And you, Gaṇeśa, you have got all these three together!" When the organs of thought, word and deed are glued together, they're all perfectly synchronized, and therefore a person has the wisdom, not merely the courage, to ensure that his thought, word and deed are in perfect alignment – no power on earth can resist him. And so, there's obviously success in whatever you do.

In this manner, you'll find that most of these deities that the Hindus have invented and are supposed to be worshipping have some philosophical or ethical significance. The Hindu invented a system of worship, of adoration, which bypassed the intellect and literally learned to the heart. Learning by heart is not memorizing. *By heart* means opening your heart to learn, not opening your brain to learn. That is called *worship*. In that, you do not approach an image of Gaṇeśa or Kṛṣṇa or Veṅkaṭeśa thinking: „Ah! This is a very good, beautiful symbol representing creation!", but you approach it as you approach the presence of God and worship, adore that symbol.

This is not merely intellectual understanding. To the devotee, the God in the image is present. God is present in that image.

7 Primary and Secondary Devotion

Devotees or *bhakta*s are usually averse even to discussing the symbolism of the deities because they say: „You're reducing these to mental images." Even though such descriptions are found in some scriptures, they are grouped under what is known as *mūrtirahasyam*. *Rahasya* means *secret*, *mūrti* is *form*, so the explanation of the form is hidden away as a secret. It is communicated to the disciple, to the aspirant, only when it is known that you are in that love of God already. You are in love with that form, you are in love with Kṛṣṇa, and much later they may sort of open a little window in that you see that Kṛṣṇa is not just this form, but infinite.

It's purely an approach of the heart! Where need be the intellect is brought in to supplement it. When there's doubt: „What am I worshipping? Am I worshipping a piece of stone or of wood?", then you begin to rationalize and satisfy the intellect to the extent that it is possible to satisfy the intellect. To the devotee, it is not a symbol, it is not a picture, it is not a statue, it's a living presence.

We worship the statue, we offer fruits, offer flowers, in one sense because the statue is the most egoless form you have seen. There again is an admission of the supremacy of an egoless person. That statue stands there and lets it flow by, obviously totally indifferent to what you were doing. But you go away with a feeling: „I am blessed for having been able to perform this worship."

If you serve a human person, wash her clothes, cook her food, and then if you watch your mind: you are waiting for something. I may be waiting for my wages, or at least a *thank you*, or a recognition of gratitude or appreciation. I didn't wait for a token of appreciation, of gratitude, when I did that worship! I performed the worship and I said: „Thank you very much, Lord!" and walked away. Why shouldn't I similarly do all that I have to do to that human person and walk away, without waiting for reciprocity, without waiting for gratitude, without waiting for appreciation? Then I'm really seeing God in her and I'm really loving the God and serving the God in her.

This I saw in the life of my master. Whenever he did a good turn to somebody, he usually bowed down and said: „Thank you" and walked away. It's not even „thank you for accepting it", because even therein is a little bit of arrogance. In most of the Indian languages you don't have an expression equaling the words *thank you*. If I carry your bag or something like that, you might turn round and say either of these two: *śukriyā*, which means *well done*, that's all. *Good job*! Or, if you're a little more orthodox and wish to be proper Hindu, you say *dhanyavād*. *Dhanyavād* means *you are truly blessed*. Consider yourself blessed for having been able to do this; go, get out! You may give me a few cents as wages of a hire; that's a different thing. But it is not *thank you*. In the West most people use the expression *thank you* without meaning it.

The spirit is that I am blessed in having been able to render this service to you. That again is learned from the ritualistic worship of the image. All this is grouped under what is called *gauṇī bhakti*, *secondary devotion*. *Mukhya* is *primary devotion* and *gauṇa* is secondary because it has some characteristics, *guṇa*. It has got some qualities, that is: he is „a wonderful devotee" or he is „not such a wonderful devotee", he's „a middling devotee", „an inferior type of devotee". Devotion which can be classified is a secondary

devotion, devotion which again can be set to: „she has a mother attitude towards God; she treats God as her infant“, „she treats God as her friend“, and „she treats God as her master“.

Mukhya is primary, a love which knows no reason, which needs no justification, which is spontaneous, irrepressible, unreasoning. It's just there, and therefore, it has no characteristic; love, which has no characteristic at all, and which cannot be described.

Anirvacanīyaṃ premasvarūpam (51),

says Nārada in the *Sūtras*: „The nature of divine love is indescribable." That is the supreme love that one has in one's own heart. You cannot even at that stage say that „he loves God". There's no God! What is God? Love is. And he loves that love, or loves to love that love. There is no description at all. Any description is silly.

How does one reach that stage?

Mukhyatas tu mahatkṛpayaiva bhagavatkṛpāleśād vā (38),

say these *Bhakti Sūtras*: „The primary form of devotion, the supreme God-love manifests by the grace of the holy ones." This *I love you* is a contract. As long as the I is there, it has to I-love-you, because as soon as the I manifests itself it manifests you. In that contractual arrangement, there are gradations: lukewarm love, cold love, hot, boiling. That is the degree of emotional, sentimental love. Do you know what *sentimental* means? A *centimeter* is one-hundredth of a meter, *sentimental* is one-hundredth of the mind. Sentimental love is one with one-hundredth part of my mind.

Mukhyatas tu mahatkṛpaye: „Only when the I disappears and in the presence of the holy ones, this primary love happens." It has to happen, I cannot make it. The I can only enter into a contract. The I can only create a *you* and *love you*, with various degrees of love, various sorts of love, various kinds of love. The primary and the chief mode of love can only happen by the grace of the holy ones, when you go and contact them, and you go and be in their presence, with or without verbal communication – it just happens. You begin to feel it.

Bhagavatkṛpāleśād vā: *Bhagavatkṛpā* is *God's grace*. *Leśād vā*: just a little bit of God's grace. If there is just a little bit of God's grace in your life, you will experience this love which is beyond qualities and characteristics, which is beyond reasoning, which just is. One can experience this either through contact with the holy ones, by their grace, or just a drop of divine grace.

Gauṇī tridhā guṇabhedād ārtādibhedād vā (56):

„The secondary form of love has divisions and subdivisions, characteristics, dependent upon the nature of the person." *Guṇabhedād* – if I'm an intellectual, my love of God is also intellectual. You may still love God, but you tend to rationalize the whole thing.

Or you are one of these excitable, passionate theologians. You see this in some parts of India, irrational fanaticism, with no rationality at all in it; the intellect is switched off. I am passionately devoted to God, and I see that you are passionately devoted to God, but you're not on the same wavelength as I am. We have terrible differences. My devotion to the same God as yours nearly compels me to cut your throat.

This is also devotion! Again, here is love, but it is characterized by blind passion. Because the person is a passionate person, his devotion also has to be passionate. They are so totally immersed in it, that it is not possible for them to see the other point of view.

If the devotee is active with a dynamic temperament, his devotion takes on a dynamic character. Mostly in South India I have seen people to whom *bhakti* or devotion meant doing something. God exists only in the temple, and I must go and do something for the temple. I think you have this among Christians, too, that service to the church is service to God.

Devotion can also take on the characteristic of the motivation, in the secondary stages. If I'm motivated by sickness to be devoted to God, then I pray to God for relief from suffering, and if you read my hymns and the psalms that I compose, all of them are miserable and pathetic. Or if I'm stricken with poverty, this characteristic is my attitude towards God. If I am a curious seeker, I'm again looking into the nature of God with the eyes of a journalist. So, there again *ārtādibhedād vā*: depending upon my motivation and my characteristic, secondary devotion has qualities. It's not primary devotion.

One of the manners in which secondary devotion manifests itself is worship of an idol, of an image, treating the image as a living presence. Energy and consciousness, both these are omnipresent, and therefore present in that image also. That's also a spiral. Just as this is a spiral, which is called the *personality*, that is a spiral which is called the *divine presence*. That is where the devotee and the lord in that image encounter each other in such tremendous intensity that there's a burst, and in that, it is possible for the devotee to experience the divine presence there. That is when the mystics describe that that God – Kṛṣṇa, Christ, Buddha – got out of the statue and came towards them, talked to them, guided them.

When the fire of devotion, the light of devotion, is powerfully concentrated on that one spot, then that fire can burn the material covering as it were in that form, in that statue or in whatever you are using as a focal point. It burns that material up and then there you see not the material, not the stone, not the piece of wood and not the picture, none of those things, but it begins to blaze as the light, as the living presence. This is one of the most important secondary forms of devotion.

The other forms that this secondary devotion may take are mentioned in *sūtra* 82. They are said to be ninefold:

> *śravaṇam-kīrtanam-viṣṇoḥ-smaraṇam-pāda-sevanam-arcanam-bandhanam-dāsyam-sākhyam-ātma-nivedanam.*

Śravaṇam is *to hear*. One wants to hear the glories of God all the time, the glories of love, the love of God, which means the glories of saints or mystics. One loves to hear such stories all the time! And such people again are also devoted to the scriptures: they love to hear the scriptures. What are the scriptures but these stories?

Kīrtanam may mean both singing God's names or relating these stories. *Smaraṇam* is *remembrance*: when you are alone, you sit and think of, remember all these stories of the divine.

Pāda-sevana or *adoration of the feet*, service of the feet of the lord, may mean worship of an image or doing some service to the temple or serving humanity, feeling the presence of God, feeling the presence of God in all. *Arcana* is offering flowers in worship.

Bandhanam: *salutation*, saluting God not only in the idols and images, but greeting each other, feeling the presence in each other. This again is not an Oriental fancy. You have it in Germany: *Grüß Gott*! Originally it must also have meant *I greet the lord in you*. So, *bandhanam* is salutation which may in a restricted sense be saluting God and the holy men and in a wider sense saluting the omnipresence in all.

It is Kṛṣṇa who in the eleventh book of the *Bhāgavataṁ* says: "The best form of salutation is mentally to prostrate even to a donkey, feeling the presence of God in all." But again, one cannot do it hypocritically. It must come from within, as throwing a pebble in the lake it raises ripples in concentric circles. If I learn to see God in that image and in that environment, I learn to see God in the church, in the temple, in the holy men, in good people, not just in good people, in other people also, and then not only in people, but in the trees, in the mountains, the lake or the river.

Dāsyam is the attitude of a servant. *Sākhyam* is to treat God as a friend and *ātma-nivedana* is *total surrender*.

All these are graded forms of the secondary devotion. Though they are regarded as grades, some commentators have even said that it is enough for one to adopt one or the other of these forms. It was again Swami Sivananda who insisted: „Why not have everything? Why do I have to say that I am a *kīrtan-bhakta*? Then you become contracted. Why don't you expand? You're not doing only *kīrtan*, you're not singing all the time! You are alone sometimes. When you're alone, why don't you meditate? When you go to a temple, why don't you do some service there? When you are among friends, why don't you talk about God, glory, spiritual life?"

All these can be combined. After all, it is God you are loving. So, it's possible to love the same God *sarva bhāvena – in all attitudes*! You regard God as your servant, as your master, as your friend, as your lover, as your child, all together, all! Perhaps at the appropriate time or perhaps all together. Then it is possible to live an intense and beautiful human, ordinary or worldly life: she loves her husband, she loves her children, she loves all of us and she probably loves the plants and Ganeśa. There's no harm in this! Then when you say, „I love my husband" it's right: „the God in him". „I love my children" – yes, the God in them. It is not as though the devotee must adopt only one *or* the other, it's possible for the devotee to be totally devoted in all aspects.

When this devotion becomes total, then the ego has no shelter. The ego has no shelter, it gets hit everywhere it goes. You cannot keep a little bit for yourself and say: „Well, that's mine. The rest of it I'll give it to God." When the ego finds no shelter, and therefore nowhere to hide, it vanishes. And then, by the grace of God or the grace of holy men, the primary type of devotion manifests itself.

8 Mantra: A Key to Self-Knowledge

One of the foremost among the texts which are treated basic to the cult of devotion is known as *Bhāgavataṁ*. *Bhāgavataṁ* literally means *of God*, so it is *The Book of God*. It deals with the creation story and the nature of God; how all these things were created by whom, and how many times they have been created, how it is being maintained, and so on. One of the common practices adopted by people who follow this cult of devotion is reading this, studying it. It's like the Jewish people reading the *Torah*. Go on reading, whether you understand it or not. The reading itself is considered auspicious and meritorious. Frequently in this scripture, it is mentioned that even devotional practices have this one single aim: control of the mind.

What is control of the mind? Control of the mind is considered the prerogative of what is called *rāja* yoga, but here we are told that that is the fundamental aim of even devotion. We seem to be running out of track. We were told *love, love, love* and then suddenly, all this love is meant for control of mind! Why is it so? Because when the mind is controlled, it cancels itself out, and what remains is love. Love is not something which you can produce, love is not something which you can conceive of, figure out what it is and how it must be applied.

All that is not love, it's mere idea, a notion. But when the mind is controlled in the sense of *understood*, then selfishness is removed, ego-sense is removed, all the ideas, images and the assumptions you had about love, about God, about yourself and all the rest of it. What exists when none of these limitations prevail in your mind, that is love.

If you really and truly love, your mind is not there. When there is love, there is no mind. When there is mind, there is no love. It's a contract, it is mutual understanding, mutual backscratching, and sense gratification. And therefore, one may say that *bhakti* or love of God, the practice of devotion, is an aid to meditation, and one can equally well justify that control of mind and meditation are necessary for the love of God or devotion to arise.

Ramana Maharshi, in *Talks with Ramana Maharshi*, makes it beautifully clear. With what do you control the mind? He says: „The mind controls the mind". You can say: „I'm not going to think of the devil" – which means that you are thinking of the devil constantly! What you wish to avoid you are thinking of constantly. One part of the mind telling the other part of the mind: „Thou shalt not! Thou shalt not!" Ramana Maharshi says very beautifully: „Understand what the mind is!" With what do you understand? It's nothing at all!

The mind minus the movement is its essence. The mind minus the movement or energy or movement of thought is the essence. That essence is capable of watching, observing, understanding the mind, in which there is movement. It appears to be two parts, but they are not two parts! It is the intelligence in which there is no movement of thought that observes the movement of thought that is called the *mind*. When that happens, the mind with the movement of thought also becomes still.

You look at the lake and the totality is realized as the lake. That mass of water and the mass of consciousness with all these ripples and waves, the movement of thought and all those spirals, the totality is seen as – seen as? You cannot call it *mind*, you cannot call it anything else, so you invent a new word. In the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* we are given a new word which is *sattva. Sattva* is pure being. *Sattva* is *what is.* That is control of mind. Control of mind is not brutally saying: „I won't think of that, I won't think of this". All that you can try, all of that will work for some time and then you get bored with it, it doesn't work anymore, or you relax, go to sleep thinking that I have fully controlled my mind – and it's all gone!

One of the major tools used by the devotee is *japa*. *Japa* is repetition of a mantra. This may be a good occasion to just have a quick look at what a mantra is.

What is a mantra? The dictionary gives quite a number of meanings, but we'll look at it from the other end: Good advice is a mantra. Good advice is a mantra, and a good adviser is called *mantrī* – a *minister*. A governmental cabinet minister is also called a *mantrī*; *pradhan mantrī* is prime minister. Any inspiring statement is a mantra!

> *Dhyāna mūlam gurur mūrtiḥ*
> *pūjā mūlam gurur padam*
> *mantra mūlam gurur vākyam* (*Srī Guru Gītā* 76).

Mantra-locana is a *secret conference*, a consultation. Plotting is also called a mantra. The essence of what goes on in that conspiracy is also *mantra*, *secret communication*, and all that is the function of the *mantrī*, the minister. An inspiring piece of advice, an instruction that the guru gives is a mantra. Any inspiring phenomenon is a mantra. It may even be a bird whistling; if that inspires you, if that opens your mind, that's a mantra.

This takes us to the next group: *manana trayeti mantra*, that which enables the mind to be open. In Zen terminology, that which redeems one by being contemplated is a mantra, that which saves one. I take the liberty of avoiding the use of the word *me*. Because: it saves one from whom? Who is my enemy? The enemy is that in me – ene-*me*. There's no other enemy: that which is in, which is me. So, that which saves me from myself is the mantra. That which saves me from my own mind is the mantra.

In practice, a mantra incorporates what is popularly known as a name of God. *Name of God* – what is the name of God? Who determines what the name of God is? And if God alone exists, does that God need a name at all? Why does one have to call? Does your fingertip call you: „Ho, let's go on!"? No. If you are a small cell in the body of God, you don't even use the word *God*. *God* is an indication, a formula, theory. Now, from there on, it's free for all. You say this is the name of God, she says that is the name of God, the other one says that is the name of God, and we all have our names of God.

In the *Yoga Sūtras*, Patañjali mentions:

> *tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ* (1.27).

„When one has an experience of the divine, the manner in which one gives expression to the experience of the divine is *Oṁ*."

When there is pure awareness and it has to be expressed, the manner in which expression is given to this experience is *Oṁ*. Hence this is regarded as the supreme mantra. *Supreme* mantra, *inferior* mantra – don't get worried! If you think that something else is supreme, you are right, I'm wrong. Better say it right in the beginning, so there is no quarrel! And therefore, you may find that in most of the mantras we use, *Oṁ* is added: *Oṁ namaḥ śivaya*, *Oṁ namo nārāyaṇa*, *Oṁ namo bhagavate vāsudevaya*, *Oṁ rām jay rām jay jay rām*.

This is one aspect of mantra: the mantra is a name of God, usually with *Oṁ*, and some other name tagged on. These mantras, it is said, were *seen - dṛṣṭa* – by a seer. Why is he called a *seer*? Because he saw. I have faith in him, and I follow him. *Mantra mūlam gurur vākyam*, „the root of the mantra is the word of the guru" – I don't question it. How do you know that what he says is the truth? Because he is my authority. Why is he your authority? Because what he says is the truth. That's a circular argument.

All mantras come from *ṛṣi*s; every mantra has a *ṛṣi*. That *ṛṣi* in his contemplation had an experience, a vision of God, and in that vision, he also heard this mantra, and he taught it to his disciples, his disciples taught it to their disciples, and the track kept on in what is known as the *guru-paramparā – guru-disciple hierarchy*. When you repeat the same mantra, you are, as it were, tapping the source of the whole lot. The mantra has been charged and re-charged by a succession of generations of yogis, and if you use it, you are literally getting in tune with this whole stream. That is the belief. When you open a small little tap in your own kitchen, you are literally enjoying the pumping station's power. It is not as though this screw was going to add to the pressure! You're merely opening the tap, removing the obstruction. When you sit and say *Oṁ namaḥ śivaya, Oṁ namaḥ śivaya,* you are linking yourself to that source, to the *ṛṣi* who saw the mantra in the first place and then transmitted it from disciple to disciple to disciple to disciple, generations of gurus and disciples. That strength and power you derive by repeating it.

That is one point of view. I'm merely giving you points of view. The other point of view is that the sound vibrations of the mantra in themselves can alter the molecules of your brain. A mantra, recited properly, has its own inherent power. If you pronounce the mantra properly, it is able to bring about certain changes in your own nervous system, in your own brain. Obviously, magic comes to your mind immediately.

The healing mantras are based on that principle that the mantra by itself has a power. I have seen for instance people who have cured scorpion-bites with a mantra. The mantra is quite simple, it is even printed, but you have to do a certain ceremony in order to acquire the power to use it. Then you can be the worst of all characters in the world. You needn't be ethically good; I've seen the most crooked persons administering this treatment.

None of this has anything whatsoever to do with control of the mind. These are all related to the inherent powers of either the mantra itself or of a certain repetition of the mantra. These are all taking us away from the center, even if they enable us to have a vision of a deity, just as a certain vibration can leave a certain pattern on sand. If you go on repeating *Oṁ namaḥ śivaya*, it's quite possible that the sound vibration will build a figure up and you may have a vision of Śiva. You go on repeating *Oṁ namo*

bhagavate vāsudevaya and it's possible that that sound vibration builds a psychic figure that looks like Kṛṣṇa. All this is possible.

But we have still not touched how a mantra, when it is repeated, enables one to be saved from the me. I don't want to be saved from anybody else; the only enemy is this me. How does the mantra help me to overcome this me and what must I do if the mantra is to enable me to overcome myself?

Ramana Maharshi insisted: you can use any mantra you like. This mantra, that mantra – all are great, all are good, all are wonderful. He even said, if you want to use a mantra, use the mantra *I am*. He probably said it in Tamil, and it's possible to say it in Sanskrit or in English, in any language. In Sanskrit the word for *I am* is *aham*: *a*, the first letter, and *ha*, the last letter of the alphabet.

So'ham is another mantra used by the *hatha* yogis, but they call it *ajapa gāyatrī*. You do not even have to repeat the mantra. If you listen to the breathing, you'll find that your own breath already repeats it. I don't have to say it even in my mind. It's there, built into me.

You can use the mantra s*o'ham*, you can use the word *aham*, you can use the word *Oṁ* or you can use any mantra you like, provided you are mentally repeating the mantra. Where is it repeated? If I know where the sound comes from, I know where the mind is: I repeat this mantra mentally and then try to see where the source of that sound is, the origin of that sound, then there is the mind.

Where does the sound come from? Don't try to answer. Nobody but you is interested in the answer, the mantra is only going to save you, not me. So, I'm not manufacturing an answer at all. When you are able to find the source, you know where the mind is: it's this. Then the next question you ask yourself is: what is the sound made of? – If you visualize any image, where is it? It's not here! You see it now, but where is it? Inside you. What is that made of? Or: what is the sound of the mantra made of? When you find an answer to that question, you found the answer to „What is this mind?".

That very moment, you hold the key in your hand, the key to the entire problem of control of mind. When you are able to see from where the sound of the mantra arises, you also know from where every thought arises. When you have answered the question: „What is this mantra made of?" you have answered a million questions: „What is thought made of?" and therefore: „What is the world made of?". From thereon, it's child's play! You want a thought, you take it. You don't want a thought – throw it away! No, they won't arise afterwards! When you know where they arise, how they arise, what they are made of, the whole thing is in your control.

You have found out how a thought arises in the mind and what this mind-stuff may be. You're watching, you are examining this, you are really demystifying this; you're not analyzing it, but you're merely looking at this, you are investigating: what is the mantra, what is the sound, what is this picture, and therefore, what is mind? For all that has become mind. You can't resist the next question when you come to that stage: what is I, then? What is I?

When you take the help of the mantra, it goes this way: first, you are mentally repeating the mantra and focusing all your attention upon the mantra. Then you begin to ask: where does this mantra arise? Where does the sound arise and what is the sound made of?

In that intensity of concentration, attention, meditation, you suddenly discover: it's me! I'm repeating this mantra. I am the content of this mantra. While you are looking for the source of the mantra, imagining it to be outside you, it suddenly discovers: „My God, the whole thing is happening in me!" Then the mantra, which was used for all these funny things becomes a wonderful aid of self-knowledge.

9 The Ultimate Goal of *Bhakti*

I was happy to hear that some of the Orthodox Christian practices are non-different from the *bhakti* concept, so that even that is not a strange, Oriental thing. I also know that in at least Latin America or Spain, even the statues are taken out in procession quite often, which is a common feature in Indian shrines. For this purpose, they have two statues of the same deity, one immobile, stationary, which is usually made of granite.

The other one is a touring God, made of five metals, *pañcaloha*, and this is taken round the village, the town or the city at least once a year for a few days. I suppose it symbolizes a message: if you see God, it's a nice thing to do, but if you don't want to, this God will come round to you and say *hello*. You can walk out of your doorstep and say *hello* to that God, and that proves that God is love. You don't have to be frightened and that you don't have to run away from him; you cannot do that.

It is usual for the devotee to go around the statue, which means that I must be able to look at this God not merely from one point of view. God looked at from one point of view is the world. The infinite experienced through finite instruments is the world. That is a mistake we have already committed. So, don't stand in front of the deity and say: „Ah, what a marvelous lord you are!" Go around and see the same God from different points of view, from different angles of vision.

And even from behind: what you call *evil*, what you call *Satan*, what you call a *calamity*, and what you call a *misfortune* is nothing but the other side of God! You are looking from in front, and it looks beautiful and marvelous. The same thing looked at from the other side is what you call *evil*. Evil does not exist in God's vision. It's only when I look at some phenomenon from my limited point of view that the mind thinks that this is evil and that is good.

For instance, where there has been volcanic activity, you have these warm springs and also fertile soil. Mauritius, where I live sometimes, is of volcanic origin, which is what makes the soil so rich. They say that even if you throw a seed there by mistake, it grows. But when the volcano erupted, it wasn't very pleasant for whoever lived there, even for a rat or a fish.

So, it's only in my limited vision that I think this is good and that is not so good. We are often told that *out of evil good cometh*. The converse is true, too: out of what you call *good*, evil cometh! You're very happy, you're prosperous, you live in an affluent society, and you think: „Ah, it's marvelous!" But the seeds of evil are there. You become indulgent, you become lazy, and the adversity is just around the corner. The moment you have seen that this is what leads to that and that is what leads to this, the division has disappeared. If you realize that adversity leads to prosperity and prosperity leads to adversity, good leads to evil and evil leads to good – my God, there is no division at all! It's flowing all the time. That is the significance of the devotee going round the statue of God taken out in procession.

In all the *bhakti* practices that we have been discussing so far, including *japa*, there is still this dualism: I, the worshipper, worship God, him. When God created one, there was no trouble. When the second one

was added, the trouble started. When that one is divided into two, the interaction of the two is capable of multiplying *ad infinitum*.

That is the famous *śrī yantra*: as long as there is only one dot, one point, there is no problem at all. When we enclose that dot in a triangle, it starts expanding in all directions: above, below, sideways. From whichever side you look at this *Star of David* which is, we'd say a *yantra* in yoga, it appears to be the *Star of David*. You can look at it from any point; it's a complete star, so that it's really a circle, but an uncompleted circle. The circle is complete perfection, and this is still struggling to expand, pointing in different directions. There's a movement in all directions. When one becomes two, the interaction multiplies and multiplies till there are infinite individuals.

The ultimate experience, whatever be the path chosen, whatever be one's attitude, whatever one may call one's spiritual practice, whether you call it *karma, bhakti*, *rāja* yoga or *haṭha* yoga, all this must lead to the abolition of the divider. Division does not exist if the divider does not exist. And who is the divider? I is the divider. Swami Sivananda used to sing a very beautiful song: *When shall I be free? When I ceases to be!*

In worship, there is the worshipper and the worshipped, as in all relationship, even if it is sublimated to the level of the divine: if you are my master, I treat you as God. If you're my child, I'll treat you as God still. If you are my lover or beloved, I still treat you as God. I love the God in you, not the personality. But still there is this I and God: I love God. I worship God. I repeat God's name.

This is: still the I is there. As long as the I is there, it can divide this God into good God, bad God. *Good God* means that there can be a *bad God*, not because God can be good or bad, but because the I defines God, and the defined becomes something else. The defined God is the world. God, defined by your senses and your mind, is the world. So, all these spiritual practices, if they do not lead to the abolition of the divider, still leave the door open for mischief to enter.

How does one go about this? We studied *pūjā*, worship. One who takes that *sādhana* starts with this idol worship, treating it as God. From the external worship, he turns into internal worship: the deity is not outside, but inside. He abstracts from an anthropomorphic form a geometric design or a *maṇḍala*, which is a little bit subtler and therefore needs a greater intensity of concentration. He enters into it, it is no longer a form, but an idea and an ideal. As this process goes on, he realizes that this is non-different from me. The truth or the energy or the consciousness in that image that I worship to begin with and which I transposed in my own heart and worshipped within myself, is in reality the same truth that I am. It is the *I am* that saw it there.

And so, it comes back to this *I am*. One who has reached that stage suddenly realizes that all this is the same, exactly the same. That idol or image was necessary at a certain stage, and now that this something has been awakened, that is not seen so much as necessary. Not that he discards it! Swami Sivananda didn't throw his shrine away; he kept it till the end of his life. It may still be necessary when I wake up in the morning. What he discards and throws away is arrogance. It is unnecessary. Someone who very proudly picks up a packet of cigarettes and throws it away: „I've given up smoking!", he's going

to pick it up at night, when nobody is looking. This is not necessary: if you don't like to smoke, leave it there. Somebody else may use it.

The person who says: „I don't worship this idol! This is all silly" has built another idol of himself, a huge idol, saying: „I'm so great, I'm such a spiritually evolved, intellectual, brilliant person! I can see God in all." If you can see God in all, why don't you see God in that also? There's no need to discard, throw it away. That attitude is childish. Keep it there to see through all this and realize that that which is there is here, and that which is here is there.

The same *pūjā*, the same worship which from external was transformed to internal, from the gross to the subtle, suddenly becomes cosmic, the worship of the cosmic being. All my actions are used as flowers in this worship. When doing *japa*, I'm repeating the mantra and I see the divine. Neither the mantra nor the divine presence is essentially different from me. Who is me? The me is essentially non-different from cosmic consciousness; again the same thing.

I need a little bit of aid, and with the help of that I get somewhere. It is not eating that makes me live. If eating could make me live, I shouldn't die, I'd go on eating. So, food is not what makes me live, but while I'm alive, it can keep me going. This *pūjā*, this *japa*, this worship is not what enables me to attain God-realization. I can walk along with their help, and as I walk along, I realize that it leads me along the same path to the same goal. They are powerful aids, if they are used intelligently.

I suppose it hurts most devotees to think that I can be one with God. That was one of the charges against Jesus, wasn't it? This man says: „I'm one with God." The orthodox theologians have tried to split hairs. Can I be one with God? No. Since the I is but a shadow, non-different from the cosmic consciousness, when it reaches this cosmic consciousness, it dissolves; it's a shadow and the shadow disappears.

From their point of view, they're right: as long as the I-consciousness is there, it cannot be one with the cosmic consciousness. The other person says: „When I inquire into the nature of this I, the nature of the worshipper, the worshipper as distinct from the worship disappears. Which means" he says, „the worshipper has become one with the worshipped."

They are merely two points of view, both are looking at the same thing. That's all, there's nothing more to it; the rest of the quarrel is sheer academics. But let's see where these theologies lead to. I'm merely giving you a theory, it's not what my belief is. The viewpoint of the ego, the I, the *jīva*, the individual is called *gradual evolution*. The other is called *sadyo mukti*, instantaneous liberation.

In this gradual liberation, they have laid out a beautiful ladder. One practices all these devotional exercises – worship and *japa* and meditation and studying scriptures, singing and chanting, satsang – and leads a very strict and well-regulated life. If one does that throughout one's life, without a slip, constantly living in God-consciousness, that is: with the individuality still prevalent, what is the state of his consciousness when the body is dropped? He was a devotee of Christ or Kṛṣṇa, and even if he dies, he is thinking of Kṛṣṇa. The whole mind is saturated with Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, that personality, that spiral gravitates to that condition in which that inner feeling can find its own fulfillment.

It is said that when that happens, this soul or personality ascends to what is called *God's own kingdom, sālokya. Loka* is the play of consciousness, or kingdom, or world; he goes to the same place as God. But obviously, there are hundreds and thousands of people who have gone before; you are not the only one that has been blessed to reach the kingdom of God, there is quite a long queue waiting there. I get in, at the end, and I can see God sitting on his throne far, far away, and I can see all those devotees, immersed in the love of God, singing and chanting, and therefore the whole atmosphere is conducive to further progress. This is the first stage, *sārṣṭi,* when I'm getting closer, closer and closer.

The next stage is *sāmīpya*. *Samīpa* means *close*, *proximity*, and *sāmīpya* is the blessing of being close to God, so that from there I'm able to see more clearly. Don't forget that all my life I have been devoted to God, and even after reaching the kingdom of God I was still attracted more to the God and not to the crowd around, and so, as I drew closer and closer and closer, the meditation or the contemplation becomes more and more intense, tremendously intense.

It is said that at that stage, the devotee begins to grow into that image. That is called *sārūpya. Rūpa* is *form*, *sārūpya* means that the devotee has the same form as the deity he has been contemplating. They have a simile: a wasp picks up a worm, puts it in a hole in a tree and it wants to get out again to get some more. Since the worm may crawl away from the hole, it gives it a sting before leaving. The worm is so terrified! In mortal fear it is so possessed of this thought of the wasp, that before the wasp returns, it has turned into a wasp. The wasp returns and says: „My God, the worm has gone, another wasp has come!"

The simile is called *bhramara kīṭaka nyāya*. If the contemplation is sincere, serious, and intense, it takes hold of your entire personality, and you tend to grow to the image of the object of contemplation. I've seen this in the case of some people. When they meditate upon Śiva, they tend to be more and more ascetic; when they are devoted to Rāma, they tend to grow into that personality, and so on. It's also true that if you are totally devoted to your guru, you tend to grow into the image of your guru. If it is unconscious, it is good; when it becomes conscious, you are imitating. *Sārūpya* is when your whole being is saturated with the characteristics of God.

There's another theory that at that stage the devotee acquires the powers of God, but even then, there is a division, there is a difference: this is God and that is the devotee, even though the devotee may have the same form. In Indian mythology, they give their Gods four arms, and they say that at that point, the devotee also gets four arms and all the divine insignia. That is the penultimate stage where the devotee has the form of God, and that form of Viṣṇu or Śiva exists as if independent of the cosmic consciousness as long as this creation lasts. When this creation is eventually withdrawn into cosmic consciousness that form is lost. The devotee, who also has the same form, merges with the cosmic consciousness. That is called *sāyujya*.

But the cult of devotion warns that right up to here, when the individuality of the devotee is lost along with the individuality of the deity, there is still the danger of division, because I have, or I has even the form of God, but I is still there. I have the form of Nārāyaṇa and I'm in the kingdom of God, and yet, there is this division. As long as the division exists, as long as the I is, the I can create a little more

division, a little more diversity. In order to illustrate this, they have a story which appears in the *Bhāgavataṁ* (3.16) and quite a number of legends.

Two of these devotees who had gone right up to the third step and acquired even the form of Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa had been appointed his own personal attendants, that is, they were guarding his apartments, as it were. One couldn't imagine of being closer than that. One day, a few sages of cosmic consciousness happened to visit the kingdom of God and wanted to enter, go and say hello to Nārāyaṇa. These two boys stopped them: „Who are you? What do you want? Visiting card, appointment?"

Those four young, enlightened sages looked at these boys and said: „Even after coming here, you still haven't dropped the vision of diversity? You are still ignorant here? Go down, get out!" It's like the same story of Adam and Eve, being banished from the Garden of Eden. The moment you have that vision of division, you don't belong here: „This is not the place for you. Get out!"

It is said that afterwards Viṣṇu came apologizing on behalf of the servants. This legend illustrates that even if I have the same form as God almighty, I can still fall. As long as I is, the I can always fall. The I can always create a division, and that division can lead to infinite diversity.

Here, they were devotees who had gradually ascended to the kingdom of God, and drawn closer, and become nearly of the same form as God, but just this ego-sense had not been abandoned, and so they were thrown out of the kingdom of God. This legend also illustrates that those sages who didn't even have the form of Viṣṇu yet had total absence of the ego-sense; they had cosmic consciousness. Whichever way we take, this total abandonment of the ego-sense is held as the ultimate, final goal.

The nine forms of devotion which we have discussed before end in what is known as *ātmanivedana*, in total and complete surrender. Total, complete surrender of the ego, of the I means utter and relentless vigilance to ensure that from then on, the I doesn't arise at all, and selfishness does not arise in any form whatsoever. From that moment onward, it is God that lives, God alone is – neither me nor you. It's not something which can be intellectualized. It's not something which can be conceptualized and stored in the brain. It is not a concept, it is not a notion, it is not an idea, it is not an ideal. It is not something which can be understood by the intellect. It is not a certain type of feeling. That surrender itself is enlightenment.

Once the person has made up their mind: „I surrender", then the I is not there anymore. If there is need to re-affirm the surrender, it means, the first time it was not done. That surrender itself is enlightenment, if it was sincere, if it was serious. From that moment onward, there is neither sin nor virtue, neither pleasure nor pain, neither success nor failure. Whatever has been described as the qualities of a yogi are found in him naturally. There is sameness, there is utter peace, total equanimity.

Ātmanivedana is total and complete surrender of the individuality. And that is God-realization; God-realization not in the sense that God was not real and I made it real. Why do I talk about God? Because there is a suspicion that this God is not real, otherwise one wouldn't talk. Who is it that is doubting all the time? It is the I that is doubting. When that I disappears, that God is real, it doesn't even need to be

said. There is no description of it. *Ātmanivedana* is complete, total surrender of the individuality. In that surrender itself is enlightenment, God-realization.

That itself is constant vigilance. It happens only once, and from there on it is vigilance. From there on, it is light. That light shines forever, keeping the shadow of ego-sense, of division, away.

Kas tarati kas tarati māyām (46),

asks Nārada in his *Sūtra*s: „Who overcomes this darkness? Who overcomes this *māyā*?" This question is followed by a few *sūtra*s, giving a description of the enlightened devotee: he has no cares at all, he has no anxiety, no worries, he has no unhappiness. He's blissful, peaceful. He engages himself in spontaneous activity, appropriate activity within this world. He may observe the scriptural injunctions to the extent they are necessary. He may observe the code of social conduct to the extent that may be found necessary. Who determines one doesn't know. Therefore, from then on, his conduct becomes unpredictable.

Elsewhere, the characteristics of these devotees are described in a shocking way: *bāla unmatta piśāca*. They behave like children, babies – *bāla, unmatta* – as if they were intoxicated or mad, and *piśāca* – like a goblin. That's because they have no individuality of their own; what happens to them, happens to them. The happening is only perceived by the spectator, by the observer. To them, it's not real at all, so that within themselves there is no contradiction. You cannot say: „But the other day you said so and so. Why are you contradicting yourself?" They don't see it as contradiction. It is as good as if you are standing in front of a tree: „Six months ago you dropped all your leaves! Why do you want to sprout again?"

There's no contradiction in the tree! When fall came, when winter was about to be knocking at the door, the tree had to drop all his leaves, and when spring came along, it sprouted the leaves again. It's only from our point of view that there is a contradiction. From the point of view of the sage or the yogi or the devotee, there is no contradiction. And therefore, in his case even what is known as *good* and *evil* is dropped away.

The *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* describes that aspect very beautifully with an expression:

pravāha-patitam kāryam (3.56.3).

Pravāha-patitam means „that which has fallen into a flood". It may refer to a human being, it may refer to an animal or it may refer to a log of wood. If something has fallen into a flood, who determines what it is going to do?

When you're looking over a bridge and the river is in flood, flowing very fast, and you slip and fall down into the stream – who determines what you are going to do from there? Unpredictable. It's not only the flood, it's you also. It's the current.

Why is it that both of us are standing on the same bridge, and both of us fall into the same stream, the same current, the current is strong, I roll away, and you swim and reach the shore? One doesn't know anything. That is what I would call *appropriate action*.

Who determines what is appropriate? Not I, God.

10 Infinite Love

We started by defining *bhakti* as *parama prema rūpa*. *Prema* is *love*, *parama prema* is *supreme love*. Why do we have to divide? In order that when the ego-sense is there, when the mind is there, the mind being the divider, the ego-sense being the divider, we do not assume that the division does not exist and pretend that I am in cosmic love. If one does that, then the sensual part of it being more attractive and more tempting, I remain there, calling that *love*. That is what happened to the word *love*.

It is easy for me to say: „Well, I practice cosmic love“, which means: I let myself go and I do what I feel like doing. That's not love, and that's not cosmic love! The mind has divided everything into *sensually pleasant* and *sensually unpleasant* without your knowledge. You have divided the whole world into something pleasant and something unpleasant, and the mind roams, seeks all that is pleasant, loves all is pleasant, and says: „I am practicing cosmic love!“

In order to avoid this danger, they said in the beginning it is better to discriminate and to ensure that this is corrected. When this imbalance is corrected, eventually you will come to that stage where the division is abolished, and awake. Therefore, we said *bhakti* means both *division* as well as *union*, devotion. Division first, devotion then. I see the division as existing, take note of it and advise caution. So *sā tvasmin parama prema rūpa* (2)*,* this is not the ordinary lukewarm type of love, but this is supreme love.

Throughout the *sādhana* -period, throughout the period of seeking and aspiration, the seeker is asked to avoid all that is of an inferior type and constantly seek to find that which is undivided, that which is unlimited. Through the limited, try to seek the unlimited. By avoiding conditioning, try to see if you can un-condition yourself. This is the struggle! The struggle is not going to create God-realization, self-realization. But the struggle is against struggle, against the division; the struggle itself is against the division, not to create something new.

Gauṇa-bhakti is devotion which has its own characteristics, which shares the characteristics of the devotee. Naturally my devotion takes on the characteristics of my personality, and while practicing that sort of devotion, I am at the same time within to see: even this is limited, even this is conditioned, even this is based on my personality, my ego-sense, my mind, my own predisposition. When you become aware of that, you are gradually avoiding it and what is called *mukhya-bhakti*, the purer form, the divine form of love, manifests itself.

Mukhyatas tu mahatkṛpayaiva bhagavatkṛpāleśād vā (38):

„This *mukhya bhakti* or the purest form of divine love is possible only by the grace of the holy ones and a little bit of divine grace.”

It’s not possible for the ego to strive to cultivate this. It is not possible to will oneself into humility. Humility is not possible to cultivate. In the same way, it is difficult to cultivate an unconditioned love, and hence Kṛṣṇa suggested: „Four types of people worship me.” There are the sick and the poor and then the seeker. The last one was *jñānī*. *Jñānī* is the wise person, the man of knowledge. He is devoted to God, period. There is no comma and no semicolon there, adding: „He is devoted to God, because …“ No

because. Can we reach that stage, honestly, by self-effort? Can I reach the state of that unconditioned love?

In other words: can I do total self-surrender by self-effort? „I surrender myself to you“ – comma, there's never a period there! „I surrender myself to you, please, can you look a little after me?" „I surrender myself in the hope …," „I surrender to you in fear," „I surrender myself to you because I know that you will grant liberation.“ Is it possible for me to die instantly, and that's it? What happens the next moment? That's the problem.

Therefore, Nārada suggested that *mukhyatas tu mahatkṛpayaiva*, the principal devotion, which is self-surrender, which is supreme love, which is unconditioned love, which is infinite, is not possible for the devotee to achieve, but that can only be had by association, by God's grace which is earned through association with holy people. Why is it so? What is *satsaṅga*, *mahatsaṅga*?

Its opposite is specifically taken up for rejection:

duḥsaṅgaḥ sarvathaiva tyājyaḥ (43).

„Avoid evil company by any means whatsoever." When that divider is there, avoid bad company and resort to good company. Why should I avoid evil company? Evil company, bad company perpetuates the division, stabilizes the division, makes it permanent. When you get out of that, you fall naturally back into the wake of devotion. Once you've fallen into that wake of devotion, then right behind you is once again the divisionlessness. It's a little bit of a trick! It looks as though you are accepting the division by discriminating between good company and bad company. But it doesn't last. Once you have jumped into the wake of good company, wise company, company of devotees, then that itself becomes the abolition of the division.

Devotion abolishes division. The common example given is a fire: you set fire to a big heap of garbage. The fire reduces the garbage to ashes. As soon as it consumed the garbage, it goes out. Here, I'm introducing this *satsaṅga* as the fire to reduce the garbage of division: the mind, the pre-dispositions and the ego-sense and all the rest of it, and once that has been dealt with, what remains is pure devotion. And in that, there is no division.

Nārada in particular is very fond of this *mahatsaṅga,* because according to legend, he became a great sage on account of *satsaṅga*. In his own previous incarnation, it is said that he was the son of a servant-maid. He had lost his father and was living with his mother. Once a band of holy men camped in the same village. His mother was serving them, and so was the boy. They used to clean the whole place after the holy men had had their meal. This boy had only that as a meal; there was no food in the house, so whatever remained he ate. It is said that this is also extremely auspicious. By this service, his heart had been purified.

As the holy men were leaving, this boy went to them and said: „Please, bless me." They gave him the mantra and said: „God bless you." It is said that he went on repeating the mantra day and night. Within a few days, he lost his mother who was still young. The mother went into the backyard, was bitten by a

cobra and died on the spot. Instead of weeping and wailing, he felt happy: „This was my only tie with the world, and even that has been snapped!" He grinned and walked away. The rest of his life he had been devoted to his mantra and his yoga.

Then it is said that he had a vision in which he was told that he would still have one more birth and he would be continually traveling and spreading God-love and self-realization then. In the next birth he was Nārada. Therefore, he was especially fond of company with holy men. If you are in their company, it is possible that all the sensualities in you may be slowly, slowly rubbed away. It is possible that the mind without too much struggle turns to the spiritual path, turns to devotion. So, he sings the glories of *satsaṅga*:

mahatsaṅgas tu durlabho agamyo'moghaś ca (39),

„holy company is not so easy to come by." Truly holy company; you can have the company of swamis, if you want, plenty of them. If you go to an adoration place and stay there, you'll be surrounded by swamis! But truly holy company is extremely difficult to come by.

Our master Swami Sivananda used to say that if you cannot have company of holy men, you can have indirect satsang. You can have lovely company! We have Kṛṣṇa with us, we have Vasiṣṭha with us, we have St. John with us. Their writings and their words can act as indirect satsang. We go on reading the same thing again and again and again, and some time it hits.

Something happens in us. You pick up some book with some small print, a smudgy, funny thing. You're put off by the appearance. Sometimes later, when this prejudice has been submerged, you pick up the book again. You open it and something, only a couple of lines that you read, seem to relate to you at that moment. Then you come back to it.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* I started reading when I was 13 or 14, but every time I picked up the book, I read the first chapter. The first chapter puts you off: a list of names, a list of this and that, he fought whom and who fought him, and – put it away!

Once I said: „No, I'm not going to read the first chapter and go to the second chapter." Then, the whole thing opens up! Once you have read the second chapter, you come back to the first chapter and you realize, the first chapter is as important and as inspiring as the rest of it. So even that is satsang. That is my suggestion when people hold satsang: Don't bother; if today it is not inspiring, it is not inspiring. It doesn't matter, there's still tomorrow. The next chapter may be highly inspiring!

Even to have *satsaṅga*, one needs God's grace. If you allow the feeling within yourself that this *satsaṅga* must also depend upon your self-effort, that I must go to India and find the holy man, you will come back like that person who wrote the lovely book called *Hunting the Guru in India.* Take your gun and go hunting! Obviously, you'll find that there are no holy men at all.

Instead: *mahatkṛpayaiva*. You recognize that such holy company and the opportunity to serve them is also possible only by God's grace, not because I deserve it, not because I look for it. I can meet a guru, I can meet a holy man and I can have an opportunity to serve him, and have an opportunity to listen to

him, not because I want it and not because I deserve it, and not because I can make it possible, but only God's grace can make this possible.

So how is the company of the holy ones attained? I don't know. I cannot make it, and I don't know how to make it possible. I only know that such holy company is extremely vital and essential to generate the supreme love of God in myself. I only know that the company of the holy ones is necessary in order that the supreme devotion to God may arise in my heart. How this is going to be possible I do not know. And instead of saying „I don't know," I'm saying *God's grace*. Therefore, I am keeping myself ready, I am keeping myself open, I am keeping myself receptive for it to happen.

When such company is not possible, and perhaps even when such company is possible, there are the scriptures, because if you go to the holy ones, they will also make you study some scripture. What makes a scripture a scripture? The word *bible* means *book*, nothing more than that. But what makes this book *The Bible,* the *book*? What is the authority for accepting the scripture as an authority? The acceptance of it by a holy person. It is the holy person`s life that lends authority to the scripture!

If Swami Sivananda says that a certain book inspires him, I also feel that's a good book to read. If Mahatma Gandhi had been saying that *Bhagavad Gītā* inspired him, then you feel like taking up the *Bhagavad Gītā*, feeling that if it served him as the authority, as a lamp unto his feet, it is possible that it might serve me also as a lamp unto my feet. The scripture derives its validity and authority from the testimony of the holy ones.

The devotee is not bound by *lokavedavyāpāranyāsaḥ* (8), he's not bound by the code laid down by society or even by scriptures, the *veda*s. He does not engage himself in worldly activities more than is essential for the cultivation or the development of devotion to God or spiritual life. He is not interested even in scriptural declarations or scriptural prescriptions any more than what is essential for his spiritual life.

Yet, Nārada says:

bhavatu niścayadārḍhyād ūrdhvaṃ śāstrarakṣaṇam (12).

„When you're still on the path, struggling within yourself, take the help of scriptures." Take the help of scriptures while you're still confused, on the horns of a dilemma. At that time, don't reject all this! If you reject, then:

anyathā pātityaśaṅkayā (13).

If at that time you abandon scriptural guidance and the guidance of holy men, it's possible that you'll go down the drain.

Once you are out of this division, and devotion has arisen in you, then they may or may not drop away. Or you become the scripture. You, not the ego, not the mind or the ego-sense but that enlightened intelligence becomes the authority. A candle is kindled from another candle, another light, and then it becomes light. That's very beautiful. A candlelight doesn't burst into flames by its own accord, that's the

idea. Either in this birth or in a previous birth, this candle has been set alight by contact with some fire, and once it has been kindled, it becomes its own light. That is beautiful, there is no doubt about it.

That's the message of Vasiṣṭha, that's the message of Yājñavalkya, that is the message of Swami Sivananda, that is the message of Kṛṣṇa, that is the message of – everybody!

Uddhared ātmanā 'tmānaṁ nā 'tmānam avasādayet (6.5)

– it's there in the *Gītā* also: „Elevate yourself by your own self, don't depend upon anybody else." But then, that is possible only when you have reached a certain inner stability. If you are swinging like a pendulum, then you may need a sort of thread to hold you there, so that in one swing you do not fly away, off the handle.

And so, *anyathā pātityaśaṅkayā* (13). If you reject all authority of scriptures, you are also rejecting the authority of the holy men, then *pātityaśaṅkayā*, they say. It's a very careful expression in the *Sūtras*: *pātityaśaṅkayā*, „there is a possibility of a downfall". It's possible that you are so pure within yourself, so highly evolved, so highly sensitive, that without the need of an external guru, without the need of an external guide or scripture, and because you don't have an authority outside yourself, you reach enlightenment spontaneously, instantly.

Anyathā pātityaśaṅkayā: „If you do not do all this, it is possible that you may be misled." There's the possibility, there's a heavy possibility. If you want to avoid this, better study a scripture and have *satsaṅga*. Neither the scripture nor the holy company jumps on your shoulders and starts riding you, taking you for a joy-ride – no. Nobody compels you except yourself. You take up these *Nārada Bhakti Sūtra*s, you study it, and if you watch very carefully, your mind accepts only what it wants to accept. So, what do we mean by saying: „This is an authority"?

It is not that because I become his disciple that I follow him. I am following only my own nose. To the extent that his teachings are suitable to what I'm looking for, I follow him. The moment he says: „Do that!" I say: „No, that's not good. I don't want to do it". I've been with gurus and disciples nearly all my life, I've never seen someone who could say: „Whatever you say, I'll do". „Whatever you say, I'll do" is very difficult, because then, from within you, something is rebelling: „No, no! That's not right" or: „That's not possible for me to do" or: „I'll at least persuade my guru to change his instructions". So, the whole thing is wrong. Nobody follows another, nobody!

That's tough, very tough training. If you can do that, you are enlightened; if you can follow one person, never mind who, and say: „I'll do exactly what you say", at that moment you're enlightened, because then you have crushed the ego and thrown it away. The guru doesn't matter at all then! He could be the worst crook in the world, he could be anything. If you have that much of total submission, your ego is gone and you're free.

Who can do this is free. He can claim that he doesn't want any guru, he can claim that he is the guru, he can claim that somebody is the guru. All these are possible for him. In the eleventh book of the *Bhāgavataṁ*, you'll find a very nice story there of someone who said: „I have 24 gurus. Water is my guru,

this cloud is my guru, the mountain is my guru, the tree is my guru, the bird is my guru, the snake is my guru, and from all these I'm learning lessons". All these are scriptures, the whole world is an open scripture, if you know how to read that language.

Otherwise, better read whatever you wish to read, knowing that from each one of those things, your mind, your intelligence will pick up what it needs from day to day.

> *Bhavatu niścayadārḍhyād ūrdhvaṃ*
> *śāstrarakṣaṇam anyathā pātityaśaṅkayā* (12-13).

If all these aids are resorted to, gradually, and all the other yoga practices that we have been describing are practiced, gradually, what was limited, conditioned and finite love grows into infinite love. The love which had characteristics, which had limitations, becomes infinite and supreme love. That is *bhakti*.

Rāja Yoga

1 How Not to Be Hurt

Rāja yoga is described by Patañjali in the *Yoga Sūtras*. We will look at some of the main *sūtra*s and see if we can find a meaning that is relevant to our life.

The problem that faces us is quite simple. It is not connected with theology – „does God exist or not exist?", or „if something called *God* exists, what is the description of that God?". That has no immediate relevance to my life. What has relevance to my life is that when I wake up in the morning, I'm confronted by two extraordinary phenomena, and that is: in my relationship with everyone else in this world I hurt, and I am hurt. That's all, isn't it? These are the two things that I have to solve. I experience pain, and my behavior towards others is such that there is no adjustment.

That can be the famous English word *fit*, *keep fit*. What you mean by *fit*? Years ago, I used to help a homeopathic doctor dispense some medicines. We bought cork in bulk, and small bottles in bulk, and we pulled out one small bottle and had to find a cork that fits it. I could understand what *fit* meant. Square pegs don`t fit in a round hole! But then I am told: „You must keep fit". Can my behavior be such that I fit anywhere, in any circumstance, any condition, any society and culture? Can I fit into it without creating any disturbance at all, not even the elbowing adjustment? Can you fit in such a way that nobody notices your existence?

That is what my heart teaches me: in a healthy condition, its presence is not noticed at all. Can I live in this world in such a way that I am not a problem to anybody, and nobody is a problem to me?

> *Rasmān nodvijate loko lokān nodvijate ca yaḥ*
> *harṣāmarṣa-bhayodvegair mukto yaḥ sa ca me priyaḥ* (12.15),

said Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. It's an extraordinary and beautiful expression: who is a yogi, or devotee or sage? One who is not agitated at all by the world and who does not agitate the world, one who is not distressed by the world and who does not cause any distress to anyone else in this world. Can I live such a life?

Let us say in theory it is possible for me not to cause any distress to others, I can live in such a way that I do not hurt in thought, word, or deed anyone else in this world. But is it also possible for me to live in such a manner that I am not hurt? That is what the *Yoga Sūtra* teaches, not how to fly in the air, not how to walk on water. All that may be possible – wonderful; to those of you who can do that: congratulations. Otherwise, you'll still buy an air ticket.

How to live without being hurt, without experiencing sorrow? Because you turn round and you see that in the lives of most of us, there is a lot of sorrow, there is a lot of suffering. We're not talking about physical pain; physical pain is something else. Sorrow, psychological distress – there is a lot of it! How does one look at this problem, how does one deal with it? One way of looking at it is quite simple: when does unhappiness arise? Who is it that experiences the unhappiness?

A few hours ago, you did not experience unhappiness at all: when you were asleep. When your mind was not active, you did not experience unhappiness. So, it is the activity of the mind that experiences unhappiness. In simpler words: it is thought that experiences unhappiness. Thought thinks „I am unhappy", and when thought thinks „I am unhappy", it experiences that it is unhappy.

In sleep, it is thought that thinks: „I know nothing", and therefore it knows nothing, it sleeps. Theoretically it should be possible for someone to arbitrarily say: „I'm happy!" You must have tried it sometime or other, but this *positive thinking* doesn't work. Why not? Because you have not understood the mechanics of thinking. By thinking *I'm happy, I'm happy*! you are not thinking, you think you are thinking. What happens to you at the gut level is what is thinking. There, at the gut level, you are saturated with the thought: „I am miserable" and right there on top you are thinking „I am thinking I am happy". It doesn't work.

At night, when you went to bed, something in you said: „Well, enough with this world! I want to sleep". What was it that said that? That was thought, that was what was thinking! Can you manipulate it at that level? Then you can change it; of course, you can change it. So, your happiness or your unhappiness is directly related to your thought. If that mental activity is not there, there is no unhappiness.

There is a rather disturbing *sūtra* in the *Yoga Sūtras*:

> *pariṇāma tāpa saṁskāra duḥkhaiḥ guṇa vṛtti virodhācca duḥkham eva sarvaṁ vivekinaḥ* (2.15).

You think that by merely juggling with thought you can bring about a cessation of sorrow. Patañjali says: „This is foolishness. You can't do it." Whatever you do, you cannot arrest change, *pariṇāma*. This is part of cosmic nature. Change means: if I'm happy now, the change is coming. If you're happy, congratulations to it; it is not that I am jealous of your happiness. But the change is coming. The happier you are that you are happy, the heavier might be the fall.

Pariṇāma tāpa: when the change comes and what you call *happiness* has gone and what you call *unhappiness* comes along, there is a burning desire to be happy and an equally burning unhappiness when that desire is not granted.

Saṃskāra: most of us do not even enjoy the pleasure or the happiness that comes along naturally to us. Take a spoonful of honey and put it into your mouth. The tastebuds of your tongue are endowed with the ability to respond, so that there is a natural experience of sweetness when you put that spoonful of honey into your mouth. But most of us do not even enjoy that. Why? *Saṃskāra*: „This is not as good as…" It could not! Why not taste this?

Memory of past enjoyment robs you of present enjoyment. It's beautiful here. „Oh, but I expected this place to be …" The expectation robs you of what is immediately available. The sweetness or the happiness or the joy or the delight that is immediately available to you, that you are naturally endowed with the ability to experience, even that little happiness is sacrificed by memory and expectation; memory of the past and expectation concerning the future.

In this way, if one endeavors to understand the problem of sorrow, one sees that the whole life is resentment and sorrow. Even the little happiness that is natural to life, even that is not really enjoyed. I see it changes and I'm worried about losing it, I'm not satisfied with it because it is not as good as it was before, or as good as I expected it to be, and eventually the change, it does come, and then I am distressed.

It is the mind that is responsible for all this. Therefore, the effort or the endeavor in *rāja* yoga is to understand the mind. It is not controlling the mind, is not manipulating the mind, but understanding how it works. Because there is another remarkable *sūtra* next to it:

Heyaṁ duḥkham anāgatam (2.16).

„You can dismiss sorrow that has not yet reached you!" It's a bold, hope-giving, and inspiring declaration. No doubt, everyone's life is haunted by sorrow, but *heyaṁ duḥkham anāgatam*: it is not inevitable that I should suffer. It is not inevitable that I should be sunk in sorrow. I can throw it away over my shoulder.

How does one do that? That is the aim of the *Sūtra*s, not to fly in the air, not to acquire any of these psychical or other powers. How not to be hurt? How not to subject oneself to psychological distress, given all these conditions? Change is inevitable in this world, and as we shall see, there is some kind of interaction. I have to live in society, in relationship all the time. In that relationship, can I live in such a way that I'm never hurt?

Sukham means *happiness*, *duḥkham* means *unhappiness*. You can see the sameness of the two: *-kham* is common. *Su-* as the prefix means *good*, good in all its aspects, pleasant, pleasing, desirable. *Du-* as a prefix means *evil, undesirable*.

Now, what is *kham*? I give you the meaning from a dictionary because then you have not to worry about authorities who have written commentaries. „*Kham*: cavity; a hole, aperture, especially in the human body; wound; axle hole; the nave of a wheel; ether, air, sky". Air, sky, wound, hole, when these are good, you are happy, when these are not good, you are unhappy.

What is unhappiness? Let's take one of them, then you can work out the rest on your own. The word *sky* may also be paraphrasing for *space*. *Kham*: I am surrounded by space; I live in space. If that space around me, if that space in which I live is not a good space, I'm unhappy. If that space around me, if that space in which I live, if that space which I occupy is good space, I'm happy.

Who creates that space and how did that space come into being? Me: I created this space, I is the space, and my thought is the space. Thought creates this space, thought is space. Now you see, it's not cosmetic treatment of *I'm happy – I'm unhappy*. Just because I smile, just because I laugh and just because I crack jokes, I may not be a happy person. The happiness comes from there. The very space that thought creates, the very space that thought is, can that space be made all happiness?

Can the I, the me itself, be happiness – happiness, not *happy*? Then you're carrying your happiness with you wherever you go. If that is unhappiness, you're sunk – you're carrying that unhappiness wherever you go. You cannot run away from unhappiness, because it's there, it is being carried – the space around

you, the space that your thought creates, the space that your thought is, is happiness or unhappiness: *kham*; *sukham* or *duḥkham.*

How does that space come into being and what do I do with that space? Having created that space, I have divided something into something else. I have created the spiral – the famous spiral again. The I is like a wave, the I is like a ripple, the I is like a spiral of energy, like a tornado. I have contracted myself, I have fashioned a thing called *individuality*. I have become an individual by thinking I'm an individual, and that thought has made a hole.

Thought is the space around me, around what is called *you*, the you also being another thought. Having divided the indivisible whole in the me and the other, the me stretches itself out as a thought, thinking: „It is something desirable; it is something undesirable".

You carry your own happiness or your own unhappiness around you. The I has created a space around itself by thought and this space is again filled with thought. When it is filled with what is called *good thoughts*, you seem to be happy, but then it's subject to change. It is subject to change! When this change is into bad thoughts, when the good thoughts become transient, you go and impose some bad thoughts to someone else. The same thing becomes bad. Good turns into evil, evil turns into good. That goes on all the time. Then you become miserable.

How to avoid contact with this unhappiness? In the *Bhagavad Gītā* there is a beautiful, wonderful expression:

taṃ vidyād duḥkhasaṃyogaviyogaṃ yogasaṃjñitam (6.23).

What is yoga? „Yoga is non-contact with unhappiness", avoidance of all contact with unhappiness. That's possible. How do I avoid contact?

The answer of Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* is something staggering: you cannot avoid contact as long as you are making a division. When you have any division, then you are seeking for contact – the two divided parts are clamoring to get together. In what is one you create a division, you tear these two pieces apart, and they want to get together. You can do that at the lake: push the water apart, create an artificial split in it – they want to get together. As long as you are creating a division, you cannot avoid the contact, which means: as long as you are pushing unhappiness away, it will come to you.

Can I live in such a way that I don't push anything away from me, that I don't long for something? That longing itself is pushing away; craving, desire, is also pushing something away, pushing yourself away. Why should I crave? Because I think that that which I crave for is away from me. So that craving presupposes a division, a separation. I do not crave for my hands; they are here. But I crave for that which is not.

That thought itself creates a distance, a division between me and the object I crave for. And that division is pain; naturally, it is pain, it hurts. Something which I hate and I want to push away – again, I create a division: there is pain. Is it possible for the mind to overcome the division totally? Is it possible to live in such a way that the mind does not create this division? That is what is called *control of mind*. If you

understand the whole process of thought, the whole mechanics of thinking, and if you understand how every thought creates a division, and every thought is a division – when that is clearly understood, then the division ceases to be, just as in sleep, but without sleeping.

Just as in sleep, but without sleeping – that is why *samādhi* is called *sleepless sleep*. *Sleepless sleep* is just two words – what is the substance, what is the truth? Can you see what you call a *sleep* as clearly as you see these spectacles? Your problem is: when you're asleep, who is going to see?

That is the basic structure of the philosophy of yoga: is it possible for me to live in such a way that the mind does not create a division, *kham*, a division around itself, so that it is not subjected to alternating happiness and unhappiness, which is mostly unhappiness?

2 Pure Experiencing

How do we avoid all contact with pain and sorrow? In order to avoid contact, one must avoid the division, the space. But if the space or the division is the truth or the reality, then one cannot avoid it. In other words: if sorrow is inherent in life, inherent in existence, then you cannot avoid it.

Is it so? The yogi's answer is that unless a division is brought about, experience is not possible, and duality is not existent. If you challenge him: „How do you know?" he says: „Look at yourself when you were sleeping. When you were asleep, where was this experience, where was this world, where were you?" This daily experience of sleep points to the possibility of the abolition of duality, an existence devoid of this duality.

During sleep, the sleeper sleeps without even knowing that he is sleeping. The experiencer does not undergo a division within himself and create an object called an *experience*. The experiencer is experiencing. The *experiencing* as such is inherent in consciousness that is pure knowledge. The experiencer being endowed with knowledge, understanding, and consciousness, experiencing is inevitable to him. Knowledge is inherent in existence; knowledge is inherent in you. That is the only snag in sleep: in sleep, that knowledge is somehow veiled; it is there, but veiled.

Pure *experiencing* is inherent in consciousness, but *experience* does not exist. If there is no division at all, the experiencer *is* the experiencing; there is no division between the experiencer and the experience, it's pure experiencing. Then there is no division, and therefore there is no experience of pain, there is no experience as pleasure as we know of it either.

This is one kind of sensation and that is another kind of sensation. In order to enjoy the pleasure or suffer the pain, the experiencer has to create a dividing space around himself, and only then that experience is possible. It is a division which makes the contact possible. How to avoid the contact? The avoidance of the avoidance of pain is its abolition. Tricky, isn't it? It is not what we usually say: „Ah, grin and bear it!" No, *grin and bear it* is endurance. There is still a division, and in that division, you create a thing called *endurance*. But here it just is.

There is no experience of pain because there no division in that experiencing. How do you know this is possible? Sleep. In sleep this is possible and therefore, in waking also it is possible. When that happens, this is yoga.

Taṃ vidyād duḥkhasaṃyogaviyogaṃ yogasaṃjñitam (*BhG* 6.23).

Yoga is the non-creation of a division in experiencing. The experience being synonymous with consciousness or knowledge, the non-creation of a division in this consciousness is yoga – it's not bringing two things together. Why must I first suggest that you and I are separate and that we should come together? We are one already, the we being two ends of the same thing.

That recognition is yoga. Hence Patañjali defines it as:

Yogaś citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ (1.2).

I think most of you know the usual translation: „Yoga is the suppression of mental modifications." That sounds great!

This little *sūtra* has got only four words, of which three words, *citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ,* define the word *yoga*. How does one know what *citta* means? The dictionary says, „*Cittam*: observing; attending; thought, thinking; attention; desire, intention, aim; the mind; the heart considered as the seat of the intellect; reason, intellect, reasoning faculty." Thought, desire, the heart, the mind.

Yogis have used this word *cittam* in various contexts, in many different connotations, and the compiler of a dictionary has pulled out all those expressions and collected in here what he thinks must have been the meaning in which that yogi used that expression in that context. Isn't that how we derive the meaning of a word? *Cittam* – let's say it's *the mind*. Now, what is the mind? He says: „Come to my library!" To understand what the mind is, he has got about two or three hundred volumes on *mind*.

Citi is *consciousness*, *citi* is *knowledge*. Do I know knowledge apart from the common usage that *I know you*? – I know you? No. I know your name. Which part of you is the name? So, knowing your name, knowing your address, knowing the color of your hair, one knows nothing, absolutely nothing.

As a matter of fact, we don't know much about the functioning of the normal, healthy mind, we know a lot more about the unhealthy mind, sick mind, aberrations. That's another extraordinary thing: without learning really about a healthy mind, we are more terribly worried about the unhealthy mind and find the whole world mad, abnormal.

What is knowledge? I'm not interested in the normal mind or the abnormal mind, supernormal mind, subnormal mind. I'm not interested in the subconscious mind, superconscious mind. What is mind, or what is knowledge, but not as in „I know you"? *I know you* is a totally meaningless expression in which neither the I is known nor the you is known, nor do I know what *knowledge* means.

I know a description of you that someone else gave me. But even that is wrong: I know what I understood him to mean when he gave what I thought was an expression of you. To complicate matters: I know what he said to me when he was in a certain mood, and which was the opinion which he formed of you when you were in a bad mood or a good mood, and that opinion had been transported to me when I was in a bad mood also. From what he said of you when you were in a bad mood and what he read of you when he was in a bad mood I think I know. Nonsense, absolute nonsense!

Then do I know you at all? My God, I don't know who I am and in what mood I am at this moment. Can we completely drop this *I* and *you* and let this knowledge alone prevail? That is called *cittam*.

Tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam (*YS* 1.3).

When this yoga takes place, *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam*: then the knower or the seer does not undergo any modification. That seer does not create a division between the seeing and the object, the experience. The seer remains in his own form. *Svarūpe* – what does *in his own form* mean?

I'm the seer, I see you. Do I? Do I see you now or does a memory see you? I know your name. That's the memory seeing: I remember your name, I remember the description that so-and-so gave me of you. Can I see you, can the seer see you? Can this pure consciousness see? Can this pure consciousness see – the *you* is gone now – without the memory operating? Without a part of the mind seeing? Without a prejudice jumping up, without even a recognition coming in? *Svarūpe avasthānam*: can this, the seer, the subject, rest in his own, in his own state?

What does it mean to be yourself? Even that has been molded; we've been molded beyond all recognition. We don't know what it is to be myself; to be myself I have to go round the tree 500 times, chasing, looking for myself.

Svarūpe – can I be myself? *Can I be myself* is really an improper expression whose proper form is: „Can I become myself?" You think I have lost it somehow and you are suggesting that I should not be what I am, but I must go round the tree and find where I am – that's an absurd thing! We're all the time becoming. We are all the time chasing. We are all the time trying to find the being by becoming from one becoming to another becoming.

What is it to be oneself? In that struggle to know what I am, I am separating myself from what I am. I am creating an experience of what I am. I'm making myself my own object – it's a ridiculous expression. Can I realize that if in *I'm seeing you* the seer is devoid of this division and *you* does not exist, *I* does not exist either?

Here, in the third *sūtra*, Patañjali says: „If you are in a state of yoga, *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam*: the subject rests in itself." The experiencer rests in its own pure form. As what? I don't know as what. Later, there is a bombshell *sūtra*:

draṣṭā dr̥śimātraḥ śuddho-'pi pratyaya-anupaśyaḥ (2.20).

When the eyes are open, seeing takes place. Seeing does take place without me seeing. But when I want to become *I seeing you*, the I comes up. So, any effort at being yourself is already a distraction.

In any effort at being yourself – „be yourself!" – the division springs up. How does the division spring up? The desire to be aware of myself creates the I. The desire for experience – any kind of experience – creates the I. The desire to see is the I. Is there an ego-sense, is there a subject apart from the desire to experience?

It is this desire that causes pain. It is the desire that causes pleasure, and it is the desire that causes pain. He's very clever, this Patañjali, he doesn't even say that you must suppress all your thoughts, that you must suppress all your desires; no, no, that's another distraction, so that I desire that I should not have desires and then I desire to drop even the desire not to have desires.

Without any distraction whatsoever, there is suddenly the awareness that consciousness is all the time, and all experiencing is made possible in that consciousness, by that consciousness.

Is it possible when a thought arises to see what is the nature, what is the content of this thought, of what is this thought made? There is an emotion, there is a feeling: what exactly is this made of? If you are tempted to make that thought, that emotion, that sensation an object for your mind to investigate, then you are thinking about it. Thinking about thought is like water drinking water: it will never come to an end.

Is it possible to know the content of thought without making it an object? Is it possible to know the content of feeling without making it an object, in other words: to enter it? That is called *meditation*. Meditation is really entering into a thought and investigating it from there.

Is experiencing possible where the consciousness rests without a division? It is terribly important to remember that we are not abolishing anything. The lake with all its reflections, with all its ripples and with all its currents and with all its waves is the lake! So, all these thoughts, all these feelings and all these emotions are just pure consciousness. If this is a thought, then there is a distraction. This is a thought. That is: if you merely think that all this is consciousness, then you are thinking of the truth, you don't know the truth.

In that pure knowledge, there is neither me nor you. Where does this division take place? Seeing is seeing, pure seeing in which there is no division into *I and you*. It is not thinking there is only one. The thinking is suspended. When thinking is suspended, thought is still there. Thinking as such is suspended, thinking as a function of the brain is suspended.

Then the waves go on; let them. Is there any harm in the waves going on playing on the surface of the lake? Is there any harm in the ripples forming on the lake? And so, here again, back to the *Sūtra*s, it is not as though I'm sitting there suppressing all my thoughts. No, I'm understanding the contents of these thoughts. I am understanding the content of these thoughts, I am understanding the content of these emotions – fear, anxiety, pain, whatever it is, it doesn't matter. I realize – not as a thought, not as an object of psychological experience; I realize from within these emotions that they are nothing but experiencing. *Fear* is a misnomer; that it is an experiencing is the truth. *Pain* is a misnomer; that it is an experiencing is the truth.

Seeing alone is the truth; I and you are non-truth. When that is done, there is no division. What is, is.

3 *Citta*: The Reality of the Heart

Citta, the mind of the heart, the heart as the source or the seat of intelligence, is often translated as *intellect*. I don't know if we really make a fine distinction between the mind and the intellect. It's the intelligence, the intelligence which operates even when what is called the *mind* operates; the waking consciousness, that which thinks, that which recalls memories, that which plans, that which makes choices, all these can be grouped into the mind itself, though the yogis make a distinction there: *antaḥkaraṇa catuṣṭaya*.

Like the hands and feet are external organs of action, *antaḥkaraṇa*, the psychological apparatus, is the inner instrument of action. The hands and feet are the physical instruments, but there is something which makes them function.

Citta is intelligence, it's something intangible. It is intangible because that is the thinker. The wave in a lake cannot become aware of the extent of the lake itself. That is the thinker, that is the subject! In any knowing, there is a subject-object relationship – *I know you*. Even if we are able to resolve all the confusion and granting that I know you: how can I know myself?

So, this intelligence is not something which is the object of knowledge; it is the subject, it is the perennial subject. It is the perennial subject everywhere, everywhere at the same time. It is so subtle that it is not grasped, it is not comprehended, it is not apprehended by the most brilliant intellect, the most brilliant mind in the world. *Citta* is that. *Citta* is the heart, the heart of everything; not just this physical heart, the heart-heart.

The *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* is giving that very beautifully: There are two hearts, he says. One is the physical heart, which is of flesh, a muscle. Vasiṣṭha says, it's not worth even talking about. That's something which comes into being and then dies, ceases to function one day. The spiritual heart is consciousness, is intelligence itself, which therefore is the heart of every cell of your being.

Aha! There we are getting out of our mess. It's not one small organ sitting inside your chest that thinks or that feels, that remembers and so on, but it is the heart of every cell of your being, the heart of every hair on your head which knows how to grow and where not to grow. It's beautiful! That intelligence is not confined even to your body.

How do you know it is not confined to the body? There is a lovely argument in the *Vāsiṣṭha* again. They say the body is made of five elements. We can easily see the four: earth – solid substance, stuff, culture; water – plenty of it; fire: heat, air. How does space come in? I'm not built of space. He says: „Space is also one of the components of the body because it is space that determines how tall or how fat you will grow."

Like the gravitational pull which holds you down to the earth and doesn't let you jump into orbit, this space above you and around you sort of keeps you in proportion. Space is involved in us, in as much as you are the space around you: *sukham*, *duḥkam*. You are the space around you! Not that you carry the space around you, but you are the space around you, you are extending to the space all around you or, in

other words: there is no division. That intelligence which animates, which dwells in every cell of this body is not really confined to this body, but it is, it is. There's no sense in saying „it is everywhere" – it is.

And it is forever and ever indivisible, like space again. Space cannot be divided. Whatever you do, space remains space. Space cannot be divided, space cannot be transported, space cannot be transferred, space cannot be cut, space cannot be burnt. Even so, the intelligence cannot be transported, the intelligence cannot be limited, the intelligence cannot be cut – it is the all. That is the seer, that is the perennial subject. – Why call it a *subject*? Because we are using words.

And so, Patañjali uses another word:

svarūpe avasthānam (1.3).

When there is this yoga, the seer rests in his own essential nature, *svarūpa*. That *svarūpa* is pure experiencing or pure intelligence, unmodified, indivisible, without any qualities, without any characteristics. It's lovely to remind ourselves of the wonderful expression in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* again:

deśa deśantra prato tanmadhye saṁvidham vīḍuḥ (6.2.171).

„Between the seer and the seen is the truth", is the reality that is pure experiencing, pure vision. It is the vision that is seen as a division. The truth is the vision. The division as a division is unreal. The truth is the vision itself.

Hence, if the seer is indivisible, homogeneous, one, all-pervading, infinite, then immediately the whole thing becomes clear. Creation, no creation, false creation, all these seem to disappear. That intelligence sees itself as the chair, that intelligence sees itself as the board, and that intelligence sees itself as the tree and as the water, as the earth, as the space, and therefore without any division whatsoever, all things are made possible.

The *Bible* says so: „In God, all things are possible." (*Matthew* 19:26) That's it; it is quite simple. This one, cosmic, indivisible intelligence considers itself, regards itself, sees itself as that, as this, as a million things. But what is the true content of the thought, of matter, of mind, of this, of that? Nothing but the pure intelligence.

This understanding is yoga. When that understanding does not arise,

vṛtti sārūpyam itaratra (*YS* 1.4).

When that understanding is not there, then each apparent individual is assumed to be real and each thought is considered to be an entity in itself. The emotions – love, fear, hate, anxiety, and all the rest of it – assume or are granted a reality which they do not possess.

We'll drop that word *love*, we'll call it *affection*. Both affection and disaffection are intelligence in operation, intelligence in functioning. Whether I'm looking with affection or with hate, I'm looking at you. Why call one thing different from the other? The content, the stuff of which this affection is made,

being the same as the stuff of which hate is made, the truth is: it is a modification of that intelligence. It is a form that this intelligence takes, it is a movement of that intelligence in one direction or the other. It is an interpretation of the intelligence.

But when this understanding is not there, then affection seems to be a solid reality. I'm fond of you and that's obvious! Do you mean to tell me that that I am fond of you is the same that I hate you? Aren't they two completely different things, one is love and the other is hate, one is non-violence and the other is violence?

There's a lovely little story: A holy man was knocked down by someone driving a car. A nurse was also passing that road, stopped, picked him up. He was unconscious. She took him home, nursed him, and he opened his eyes. She wanted to earn his grace and his blessings: „Do you know who I am?" „You knocked me down! And you picked me up and drove me here." She was in tears: „Some other vicious person knocked you down, and you were unconscious. I picked you up and brought you here!" – „That's what *you* say."

If you look back on your own life, you might find it true that you do a tremendous service to somebody and they kick you out, and then you're walking somewhere in the bush, starving, and someone who is totally unknown to you comes and does something wonderful to you. Haven't you had that experience? I've heard it umpteen times. A total stranger, you probably never will meet him again! He's kind to you, he is generous and loving, whereas someone whom you served and helped turns ungrateful. That intelligence is the same, indivisible. But we make a division into it.

When that yoga does not happen, then each one of these apparent fragments of intelligence, of these apparent fragments of consciousness are elevated to the level of reality – apparent fragments, because the intelligence cannot be divided.

It's here that one must carefully and cautiously understand the way in which these two words *reality* and *unreality* are used. When these yogis used that word *unreal*, they were not suggesting at all that nothing exists. People misunderstanding this laugh at the yogis' theories: „Ah – they think that the world is unreal!" They have not meant that the world is unreal! You look at that lake, and you and that lake includes the waves and the ripples and the streams, and then people drowning in it, the whole lot. You do see the waves – of course you see the waves! But do you see a wave as something completely separate, independent of the lake, totally different?

A wave is the lake! There's no wave apart from the lake. If you recognize that there is only one cosmic intelligence, indivisible, forever indivisible, and then call that man a *swami*, call that lady Miss So-and-so, it's perfectly alright, you're not bluffing yourself. You are living in truth, in reality. That is the reality. But do you give this person an independent reality? That's false. A reality independent of the reality – that is false, that is unreal.

When yoga does not happen, *vṛtti sārūpyam itaratra*: when this understanding of the cosmic oneness does not prevail, then a single idea, a single concept, is mistaken as the reality. And then, that concept rules. In the absence of yoga or the understanding of the totality, a single concept arises. A single

concept is enthroned as the seer, as the experiencer. That single concept, becoming an experiencer, creates diverse experiences. Who is that concept? Who is that experiencer? That is what you call *I – I experience*, *I see*, *I smell*, *I understand*.

The word *vṛtti* is often translated or explained as *ripple*, or as *wave*, as we have been doing. But it's not all that simple. In a small dictionary, the first series of meanings for *vṛtti* is: „rolling; gush, as of tears; cause of action; mode of life, conduct, behavior; method; course; respectful or affectionate treatment of; gender usage, a rule, in grammar, in literature; manner of being" – manner of being! – „nature, kind; being, appearing or occurring in; occurrence or existence of; devotion or addiction to; practice of, devoted to".

And now another series: „Subsistence, maintenance, livelihood, profession, occupation, activity, working; function, disposition, mood" – this is the sense in which it is used in the *Sūtra*s that we have been commenting on. „Occurrence or use of a word in a particular sense; pronunciation or recitation; style of composition, alliteration, form or kind of word, grammar; commentary."

All these can be meanings of the single word *vṛtti*, so it's good not to be too hasty in translating all this. At least, even if you translate, try not to be dogmatic: „This is what it means". It is when there is non-understanding, it is in the shadow of ignorance that this *vṛtti* arises. And therefore, if you want to understand what *vṛtti* means, it's good once again to start with „I don't know what it is" and investigate it.

When you are sure about it, when you are definite about it, when you are dogmatic about it, then you are clinging to one *vṛtti*, making it the whole, then you're falling right into the trap of this *vṛtti* in trying to examine the *vṛtti* with another *vṛtti*, a false idea or a false notion or a false complacency: „Of course I know! I've studied all this yoga philosophy for the past 16 months. I know what it is all about!" That is another *vṛtti*. And if you hoist that on the pedestal or throne, you are ruining the whole investigation. So, I must start by saying: „I do not know. There is a cloud. *Vṛtti* means all this."

If there is a feeling: „I understand what *vṛtti* means. It's a lake, it's a ripple that dances on top of the lake!" that is an image, that is a *vṛtti*. How do you expect this *vṛtti* to understand the totality? Can that ripple exist, dance there, if the whole water is evaporated? Does it have an independent existence? How does this *vṛtti* arrogate itself the position of a judge, of a knower of truth?

Patañjali goes on to elaborate concerning this *vṛtti*: when there is ignorance of that oneness and in that ignorance one little dummy is enthroned as the creator of all experiences, the subject of all experiences, the subject of all knowledge, it is then that all trouble starts. That is the *vṛtti*.

If I cannot know what a *vṛtti* is, it is a *vṛtti* that calls itself the knower. *I know you* is one *vṛtti*, one wave, one ripple looking at another ripple, saying: „Shall we dance?" as if they were independent of the lake. It is in the absence of this understanding that one *vṛtti* assumes sovereignty, and therefore it is not possible to know the *vṛtti* in the *I know you* relationship, subject-object relationship. The knower itself, the subject, is a *vṛtti*. Though it may pretend for the time being to observe other *vṛtti*s, the observer itself is a *vṛtti*.

Instead of trying to jump on one's own shoulders – it's a bit difficult if you try it – Patañjali says: let us study its forms, its function. How does a *vṛtti* operate? I do not know what it is but let us consider what it does.

Vṛttayaḥ pañcatayyaḥ kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ (1.5).

This is the next *sūtra*: you can recognize them by their characteristics. Here, he dismissed one problem without discussion. We can change the word *vṛtti* to *concepts* or *notions*. But let's use the word *vṛtti*, if we have understood what we may mean.

You can recognize them by the following characteristics, and Patañjali however ignores a division which to us may sound fundamental: *kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ* – whether you call these *painful* or *pleasurable*. A concept or a thought or a feeling or an experience, all these are covered by the term *vṛtti*, whether you call it *pleasant* or *unpleasant*. That's immaterial, it's still an experience. So don't get hung up on whether it is pleasant or unpleasant.

There are five main, basic characteristics of these *vṛtti*s, and all *vṛtti*s fall into one or the other of these five categories. What are the five?

Pramāṇa viparyaya vikalpa nidrā smṛtayaḥ (1.6)

Pramāṇa is *proof* or *right knowledge*. Is right knowledge then bad, too? Yes, of course! What you call *right knowledge* is still just a thought. You are very vehement in asserting that this is right. Of course, this is right. But if you recognize that that's also a thought, it's nothing more than a thought, and the stuff of which it is made is pure consciousness, intelligence, there's nothing more to it. It has been accepted as right knowledge by everybody, so we shall continue to consider it right till someone comes and upsets the applecart. Then we will consider the other one right.

Viparyaya: *wrong knowledge*. What is the difference between right knowledge and wrong knowledge? One is considered right, the other is considered wrong. One is accepted as right, and the other is accepted as wrong. There's nothing more. In yoga, they may extend it a little further. Wrong knowledge is for instance a statement like: „A barren woman got her son married".

Vikalpa is *imagination*. Imagination is something which has no relationship at all to truth, to fact. Right knowledge and wrong knowledge may have some kind of relationship to truth; one is the positive side, the other is the negative side. *Vikalpa* has no relation at all with it, it's pure figment of some mind's imagination.

But even that is based on this intelligence and its own content is the intelligence. Even your wildest imagination is true to you in that moment of hallucination. It is that same intelligence that forms the content of the enlightenment of the enlightened man and the hallucination of the madman. The content is the same, but here it is called *imagination*.

Abhāva pratyaya ālambanā tamo vṛttir nidrā (1.10).

What is sleep? Here is an extraordinary definition in the *Yoga Sūtras*. Sleep is when there is thought of nothingness: *ālambanā tamo vṛttir nidrā*. I think it may help some people who have difficulties sleeping: you lie down, and you start thinking of the world, of this and that. If for a few minutes you say: „I'm going to think, nothing exists. I'm going to think. Nothing exists." And I think of her: „Ah, she doesn't exist. I'm going to think that that doesn't exist." You will fall asleep very soon, quickly.

Abhāva pratyaya ālambanā tamo vṛttir nidrā: The intelligence is still there, and the intelligence has decided to think that nothing exists, and that is called *sleep*. That is a beautiful way of putting it, whether one agrees with the definition or not. The intelligence is still there, it is not gone! It cannot go, it cannot go away because it is all-pervading and perpetually existent. But that intelligence holds on to a concept of a notion that nothing exists. When that happens, that is called *sleep*.

Memory – I think that's quite simple:

> *Anubhūta viṣaya asaṁpramoṣaḥ smṛtiḥ* (1.11).

The experience has left its mark on the intelligence. When that impression is revived, it's memory. Whether you call it *right knowledge* or *wrong knowledge*, it's a wrong statement, that's all. It's still based on the same intelligence because my intelligence holds on to this misconception.

So, whether it is right knowledge, wrong knowledge, imagination, sleep, or memory – all these are fragments, little bits and pieces, waves, ripples. Their own substratum and content is this intelligence which is true, which is real, absolutely real. But in themselves, as themselves, as independent of this totality, they are unreal. To regard them as independent realities is ignorance, but to be able to see through them and to see that they are all one cosmic intelligence is realization.

4 *Vṛtti*s: Experience and Expression

Yoga, or what is called *rāja* yoga, is meant to enable us to understand the whole business of life, or experiencing and expression. We are related to this life and this world through experience and expression. A clear understanding of what the *vṛtti*s are enables us to understand the truth concerning the nature of experience and the nature of expression. Through that I'll get back to the spiral.

Citta is what goes on beginninglessly, endlessly. A *vṛtti* is a flow. There is a flow, and the flow is a flow only when you look at only the flow. *Citta*, the total lake, is one, there's no division in it. It flows not only that way, it flows this way, that way. All these flows and waves could be called *vṛtti*s.

Every particle of dust, every atom of existence is that consciousness. In that, there is constant flow of energy in all directions. One of those movements of energy in consciousness is this *I am*. That is one *vṛtti*. For some mysterious reason, this one somehow feels „I am". There is an *I am*-consciousness there. It is consciousness, it is non-different from consciousness.

Probably we will find that this *vṛtti* undergoes lots and lots of changes. But that does not stop the flow of energy, laden with consciousness, laden with energy. Something is flowing all the time, there is nothing static. Even a building is not static; something is happening all the time. Intelligence continues to flow from there, intelligence continues to flow from here, intelligence continues to flow in every direction possible.

Thoughts continue to operate and to flow. They are not called *vṛtti*s, they are mere movements in consciousness. As these things pass the *I am* spiral, the me, the *I am* attributes a direction to it. It says: „It comes into me!" It's not coming into him, it is flowing past him. It is flowing through him, but at that point he says: „This is coming into me", and therefore the *I am* regards that as an experience.

Now we see how it's small! The sun abd the wind are not interested in hurting you or in pleasing you. Nobody takes any notice of me. „Oh, it's cold!" – I pretend as if the Good Lord created all this world for my sake and if I'm merely going to say, „Oh, it's cold!" he's going to turn the heater on. He doesn't. He doesn't care! Because this is not meant either to please you or to displease you. Nothing in the world happens to please you or to displease you. This intelligence and the energy keep flowing all the time. But at one stage, when it comes in this *I am*-spiral, the *I am-vṛtti* which has arisen, the *I am* says: „This is *my* experience!"

That same silly thing doesn't stop there, it goes on. Here it calls it *experience* and there it calls it *expression*. Both these are *vṛtti*s, that's it. There is a cool breeze. The cool breeze takes no notice of this poor man, and it hits his back. It didn't hit his back at all, it was flowing, it's flowing everywhere! But since he sits there, exposing his back to the cool breeze, he feels it on his back, and so that becomes an experience to him, in relation to him, and when it hits the back of his head, that becomes an expression.

This same thing, here it is an experience of cold, and there it is sneezing, or coughing. Neither the cool breeze nor the sneezing has anything to do with him. Being part of this whole structure, existence, the body reacts appropriately to each situation as it arises. Even that is not true: the totality keeps vibrating,

oscillating, living. The energy in the consciousness being life, cosmic life, that cosmic life keeps churning, churning everywhere, but churning only in relation to one another: within itself, there is no churning.

That's simple, I think, because we're all sitting on the same satellite which is spinning at terrific speed. Nothing seems to happen, because we're all there, all turning at the same time, and therefore there is no sense of movement among us. In itself, there is no motion, but to an observer, there seems to be terrific motion. This motion is life, it goes on. It is inherent in that being, exactly as in your own body right now billions of cells are doing their thing. They're just sitting peacefully, quietly, nothing happens at all. It doesn't look as though blood is flowing in the veins or the brain is exploding in a billion pieces.

The *I am*-*vṛtti* interprets all these movements in consciousness as experiences on one side and expressions on the other side. Both these are *vṛtti*s again. I hope you don't get confused: The *I am* itself is a *vṛtti*; *vṛtti* in the sense that it is an isolation from the whole, from the totality. What happens to it is again interpreted by itself as the *vṛtti*. First, the thought *I* arises. This is a thought: there is no *I am* in me, there is no *I am* in the body. If you're able to watch yourself the first thing in the morning: first there is this thought *I am*. Then other thoughts flow into it, through it. Nobody can determine whether thought really arises from you, in you, or it passes through you, whether an experience is somehow related to you. Anything definite said about the origin of thought is a thought, and that thought definitely arises in you.

As these waves come from that side, which the *I am* interprets as experience, it classifies them as pleasant, unpleasant, good, bad. What comes out of the other side, it calls *expression*: I'm doing this, I know this. This is another type of *vṛtti*: *I know*, *I don't know*, or *I know it wrong*. Can we understand this? If I understand that, my life is free. If I know that even this *I am* is not an independent reality, it is one wave, one ripple in the totality, then there is no problem at all. It is not my experience anymore, it is not my doing, I is not the doer anymore. The action itself is there all the time, acting goes on, experiencing goes on, functioning goes on, living goes on. When the *I am* sets itself up as a filter, then you'll find all kinds of perversion. It's not difficult to see how the fivefold *vṛtti*s come into this and cause unhappiness.

Which is dreadfully obvious in the field of religion: You're quite definite that this is the truth, but somebody doesn't accept it as truth. I know this to be true! But it's useless, he doesn't accept it, and there is sorrow, there is misery: he's a dear friend of mine, and he doesn't accept what I'm saying to be true, though I know this to be true! How is it that I can't make him understand this? So even in what is known as *right knowledge*, in what I am convinced was right knowledge, there is *duḥkham*: the space around me is miserable.

At other times, the expression, as it passes through the *I am*, is interpreted by the *I am* in a wrong manner. I look at her and say: „Ah, it's a man." Why so? In India, only men wear trousers. It's wrong knowledge. Again, if my actions, if my behavior springs from that knowledge, it can lead me into all sorts of difficulties. Any action that springs from wrong knowledge is again fraught with danger.

Then there is imagination. All these thoughts flowing through, feelings flowing through, energy flowing through have nothing whatsoever to do with the *I am*, the *I am* itself being a movement of energy in

consciousness. And then this *I am* says: „Ah, she's an angel. She's a Goddess!" Imagination. Or: „She's a devil" – all the imaginations one can have. These imaginations get a rude shock sooner or later, what you call *disillusionment*. People talk about disillusionment as if it were a disaster. To me, it's the most wonderful thing that can happen. Any action that springs from that imagination is stupid, foolish. It is bound to run into – hopefully – some trouble or other, some difficulty or other. Never feel sorry for being disillusioned!

The flow of the *vṛtti*s through this personality naturally leaves some trace, just like fragrance being wafted; as fragrance spreads out, everywhere there is a little bit of fragrance left behind which is called the *vāsanā* or the *saṃskāra*. This is memory. If we're in a place full of camphor – I don't wanted to say *cigarette smoke* – your dress smells of camphor for a couple of days. Something is sticking there. Action springing from that is also risky, fraught with danger.

Any action that is based on memory is defective action, inappropriate action: it is action based upon something which doesn't exist now, which is not in the present. The memory itself may be tricky. „Oh, I remember you! Aren't you Don Thomas?" You say: „No." – „Oh, you look like Don." Even if the memory is right, the action is in the now, but it springs from the past and is related to the past. If I do not let my actions spring from there, then I take notice of you now, I'm alive in the now to see you, and to see what the appropriate action in the present is.

The fifth *vṛtti* is *nidrā*, *sleep*. Sleep can also mean shutting one's mind away. It is non-action, repressive action that springs from there. There is a challenge, there is life, there is movement, there is motion, something is happening now! And you say: „Ah, I don't care."

So, any action and any expression that is based on these five *vṛtti*s is bound to lead to chaos and sorrow. Some people try to interpret the five *vṛtti*s in another way, vaguely: „I see, my whole life is ruined by these *vṛtti*s. I must find out what these *vṛtti*s are." Who is it who finds out? It's another *vṛtti*. This *vṛtti* says: „I must find out what these *vṛtti*s are. Ah! I know!" The *I know-vṛtti* is as disastrous as the *I don't know-vṛtti*. „I know." But how do you know? „I've read it in Swami Sivananda's *Rāja Yoga.*" Or Buddha's teachings. That is only what you think to be right knowledge.

Or you sit in meditation: „I'm entering *samādhi* now. I am free." This is pure and simple imagination, hallucination. You can live in a hallucination till the next blow comes along. As soon as the next blow arrives, you're awakened to disillusion. Or I imagine that I understood the whole *rāja* yoga: „This is *citta* and this is *vṛtti*, and as long as I don't allow this *vṛtti* to come into the *citta*, everything is alright". Who is thinking all that? That is the *vṛtti*! The *vṛtti* is not outside all this.

Sometimes, this is considered the subtlest and the most intractable obstacle in *rāja* yoga and in meditation, too. Once in a while – the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* might call it *by sheer accident*, others might call it *by God's grace* – you are granted one little experience. „That's it!"

The experience was before you said: „That's it!" It came floating along, it just passed through you, entering through your left ear and going through the right ear. And as it went to the right ear, you said: „That's it!" That is: that *was* it, that's gone! And you remember. What do you remember? You remember

nothing. But you think you remember! Experience is not a thing which can be stored in memory. What the mind can remember is that you did something; you twisted, there was a jolt, electric shock in the body, and you said: „That's it." The next morning or a week later, you sit for your meditation, and you shake your body – you can go on doing this forever, nothing happens! The past is beyond recall, you can do nothing about it, absolutely nothing. What is past is past. And it's good that it's past. I am as I am now! You can neither experience what you experienced once upon a time, nor express what you did once upon a time. You acted foolishly, what's wrong with that? It's better that you don't act now foolishly also. That's the only thing that can be done.

How does one overcome the tyranny of the *vṛtti*s? How does one avoid the *vṛtti* being enthroned as the *citta*, as consciousness, as intelligence? How does one erase the limitation that the *vṛtti* is from arising in the individual consciousness, how does one avoid this limitation from happening at all? That's the rest of the *Yoga Sūtras*. To begin with, there is a fairly vague statement:

Abhyāsa vairāgya ābhyāṁ tan nirodhaḥ (1.12).

Abhyāsa and *vairāgya*: *Abhyāsa* is translated into *practice*. Practice of what? Can understanding be practiced?

Citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ (1.2).

Nirodhaḥ: we try to suggest that it is not *suppression*, but an *understanding*. Because none of these things need to be suppressed!

There is certainly a false notion that the *I am* is independent. Can that notion be suppressed? How does one suppress a shadow? The limitation of the totality as an individual, *I am*, is not real. If it is real, it cannot go. If that wave which you saw on the lake yesterday was real, it could never be wiped out! The waves and the ripples are not independent realities, the lake alone is the reality.

Citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ means understanding the essential indivisibility of *cittam*, the indivisibility of the lake, the impossibility of the ripple or the wave becoming independent of the lake. That is what is to be understood: that I is, but I is the whole, I is the totality.

And therefore, I is you. There is no division. This divisionlessness has to be understood. The limitation cannot be suppressed – what do I mean by suppressing it? But it is true: when you understand it clearly, then there is a restraint, there is a certain abolition of the individuality. But it is not a suppression. It's not like sweeping the shadows and putting them in the garbage can, it is like shining a flashlight on the shadow. Then it's gone.

Now, if that is understood, how does one practice this understanding?

Abhyāsa is *practice*, and *abhyāsa* also means *repetition*, repeated practice. Patañjali defines *abhyāsa* very beautifully:

sa tu dīrgha kāla nairantarya satkāra āsevitaḥ dṛḍha bhūmiḥ (1.14).

Abhyāsa becomes firmly established when it is continued for a long time, uninterruptedly. When this understanding continues uninterruptedly and for a long time, it is probably established. Otherwise, the *vāsanā*s which the *I am* has gathered, memory of past experience and so on, spring up.

A very holy man whom I met once in the Himalayas said something very beautiful. He said: „*Abhyāsa*? Once you have understood that this is real, just stay there. Don't move. Don't let any other thought arise." It's as simple as that.

God is omnipresent, yes? Say it three times: „God is omnipresent" and close your eyes: „God is everywhere. All that I see is God." Open your eyes and see God. Don't let the thought arise again: „Ah, this is a swami! Not a God". If that is not possible, try again. If that was not possible at first attempt, try again. That is the meaning of repetition. Repetition has unfortunately come to mean what is beautifully expressed in your language as *trial and error*. The expression itself demands that there should be error.

At least there should be *trial and learning*. Every time you try, you are looking for understanding. That's what we do. The need for understanding arises because the understanding is still not there. It is not possible to try to develop this understanding. If you touch that truth once, you are instantly liberated, freed.

Some of the snake charmers in India have what appear to be deadly cobras in their basket. You run at the very sight of them! But they have removed the fangs. The snake charmers themselves know that they are harmless now, and you find them patting them on their head and teasing them, torturing them. They are not afraid at all, for the simple reason that they know that the fangs have been removed. He'd be a very stupid person to be frightened after that. In the same way, if once I have understood what *cittam* is, and that the *vṛtti*s are not independent of the *cittam*, *citta* is the stuff; intelligence is and the *vṛtti*s only appear to be, there's no more error, and therefore no more trial. If there is no more error, there is no more trial. I've tried and I've learned, that's it.

Till that happens: *abhyāsa*.

5 *Nirodhaḥ*: The Totality Seeing Itself

The personality is itself a *vṛtti*, is itself a wave, is itself a ripple, is itself a movement of energy in this consciousness. In cosmic consciousness, this energy is moving from everywhere to everywhere all the time, and one such ray, one such spark, which means every spark all over the place all of the time, assumes an *I am*, an *I am* status, just as we feel *I am*.

There are millions of bugs probably in every room everywhere, just as there are millions of fish laying their eggs; there is life everywhere in every speck of space. The stone is only a stone in relation to us, to me. Consciousness, energy, here thinks it is a human being; there it thinks it is a stone. There is no essential difference at all. This somehow assumes an individuality, and having assumed an individuality, it reinterprets all the current of energy moving all the time as both experience and expression. Experience and expression have nothing whatsoever to do with the individual, but the interpretation is the individual's.

Wind blows; that it is hot or cold is your interpretation. The movement in itself has nothing whatsoever to do with the individual personality, but the interpretation is entirely the personality's. That's the fun, and if this fun is grasped, the whole thing becomes easy. What we call *actions* is the energy passing through the personality. The same energy is received by the personality as experience and leaves the personality as expression. „The wind bloweth as it listeth." (*John* 3:8) That's it, it keeps blowing! But again, it is the personality that interprets it as right action, wrong action, right knowledge, wrong knowledge, imagination, indifferent action, neutral action, loving action, hateful action. The flow of energy itself is not affected by any of these, nor is the consciousness affected, which is everywhere all the time.

You can love and dance and jump off the roof or up the nearest tree, this consciousness which is there is unaffected. You can sit right on the lakeside and keep crying for the next six hours, even the level of the lake wouldn't rise. The movement of energy in the cosmos is not affected by what you do, because you don't do anything, the energy that is constantly moving merely passes through you. Neither the movement of energy through this place called the *personality* nor the existence of intelligence in this place called *my personality* can be canceled, so that you cannot suppress yourself.

People have exalted this also: the yogi is unconcerned by this movement of energy, so that he can tear all his clothes and enter the cold water, and he's unconcerned with heat and cold, he's unconcerned with what goes on. The stone lying on the bed of the lake is unconcerned with heat and cold. If you are constantly wishing for this unconcerned state of existence – be like that! That which is affected by heat and cold in flesh somehow disintegrates. A few pieces of bone will be there, for some archeologists to come upon another three or four thousand years. If I'm discovered! If that is what you want. Because consciousness is there everywhere, that cannot be destroyed.

The energy keeps flowing. It knows what to do because it is intelligence. There is pure movement of energy, no right action, no wrong action, no good action, no bad action, no love, no hate, there is no this, there is no that, except as interpreted by the individual. It is that confusion that is non-existent, that is

unreal. When that confusion is clothed in reality, that, they say, is inert substance, lifeless, death. Otherwise, there is nothing dead in this world. Everything is vibrant, everything is vibrant. Even the space between us is vibrant.

Nirodhaḥ – how do we arrest, how do we stop, how do we restrain the individual personality from foolishly, ignorantly, uselessly interpreting the flow of energy as experience and expression, the interpretation being non-existent? Please remember that: the interpretation has no reality at all. What is it that says: „It's cold, it's miserable!"? From where does that feeling arise? That feeling is neither in the water nor in the skin. When cold water is splashed on the skin, it contracts, it undergoes a natural change. That's perfectly alright. When you find someone hosing from behind, the legs naturally begin to gallop. That's perfectly alright, there is nothing wrong with it. You don't have to show off, standing there and: „I can face it".

If that intelligence in you is stupidity, that will do that. There again you have no choice. Like the intelligence in you temporarily feels *I'm sleeping* at night, that intelligence is also capable of feeling *I'm stupid* and you stand there being hosed. Otherwise, the action is spontaneous and natural. There is no need to suppress that. There is no need to restrain that.

What is it that needs to be suppressed or restrained or controlled or whatever it is? The *vṛtti*, and the *vṛtti* is: „Oh! This is cold! I'm miserable." That is not there anywhere, not in the water, not in the skin, not in the life-force, not in the movement of energy, not in your consciousness. When it is not there at all, how do you restrain it, how do you wipe it out? That is the problem, *nirodhaḥ*. The problem is not one of merely grinning and bearing. How do I restrain, how do I control, how do I suppress, when that which I wish to control is non-existent, is a figment of somebody's imagination?

It is not possible unless this totality is realized. You can try to suppress whatever happens, you are a human being, and the body has got its own built-in faculties and limitations. The life-force that animates that particular piece of flesh has got its own faculties, its own limitations and it'll take care of itself. There is enough energy in this body to look after itself till seven days after you die. *Prāṇa* does not leave the body till the last bit disintegrates, decomposes. The expression *life has departed* only means that the brain has stopped functioning.

There is one aspect of *prāṇa* that is called *dhanañjaya* which stays behind. When all the guests have departed, there is a lot of work to do, washing the dishes. Here, it's not only washing the dishes, but sort of decomposing it. Erecting a building and demolishing a building both involve tremendous engineering skill and work, hard work. Once the guests have departed, the guests in the body being the sensory functions, this *prāṇa* says: „Okay, I'll decompose it, return all these things to their proper elements and then I'll leave." There is that much of intelligence and that much of intelligent energy that animates this body. We don't have to worry at all about that.

What is this I that keeps interpreting pure movement of energy in unlimited consciousness as this or that? It divides the movement of energy into experience and expression. In you it was an expression, in me it is an experience. A wave goes round, and as it passes through her, she smiles. Her expression is

considered good or evil: *she's naughty, she's good, she didn't mean it at all*. When the same movement of energy reaches this place, I am happy, unhappy, miserable, thrilled, delighted, charmed, floored. That expression is again classified into so many things, this experience again is classified into so many things. Who is it and what is it that creates all this? That is the only thing that needs to be dealt with.

Dealing with that is nothing more than understanding the totality in it, the totality including this movement, so that there is no need to suppress that smile, there is no need to suppress this experience. You cannot do that unless you want to turn yourself into a stone temporarily. You don't have to do that, you cannot do that. But can this be understood that there is no she there and that there is no I here, and that this is just pure movement of energy in consciousness? When that happens, the assumed and unreal independence of your personality is – dissolved? I don't think there is any expression for it – and the totality is seen, the whole is seen. Who sees the whole? The whole sees itself, the totality sees itself.

That is called the *nirodhaḥ*. If this is so, how is this *nirodhaḥ*, restraint or control, how is this control effected? Please notice the change in the expression. It is not: „How do *I* control this?". If you say: „How do *I* control this," you will control something else. Here the control or the restraint is directed at the I itself. And so, how is this controlled?

Abhyāsa vairāgya ābhyāṁ tan nirodhaḥ (1.12).

How is this control effected? It is conventional to say: by two means. But we presently see that they are not two, but one: *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*.

Abhyāsa has been interpreted by teachers to mean all this: yoga *āsana*s, *prāṇāyāma*, meditation and good action, right action, dietetic discipline, study of scriptures, all that people have done in the name of yoga. *Vairāgya* has been interpreted to mean that you shouldn't look at temptations, you shouldn't think of temptations, shouldn't touch this, you shouldn't smell this, you shouldn't hear this. All that may be true! We're not concerned with that.

As someone said: „See that the infinite alone exists. To live in that consciousness that the infinite alone exists is *abhyāsa*. And *vairagya* is: Never think of the world again." Never let the thought of the world arise in the mind, that is *vairāgya*. Constantly remember or contemplate that the infinite alone is real. If that is meaningful to you – bye-bye, that's all, *Oṁ*. If it is not, you might continue.

These two are not two, but one. If you again come back to this pillar with the energy passing through: on the one side it is experience, on the other side it is expression. *Abhyāsa* is related to the expression-part of it and *vairāgya* or dispassion concerns the experience-part of it. *Vairāgya* is the direct knowledge or understanding that the experience has nothing whatsoever to do with the me, the me itself being part of this experiencing. The me being just one little ripple, one little wave in this ocean of cosmic consciousness, it has no business to experience anything, much less to classify experiences. That is *vairāgya*, which necessarily means that you do not even suppress your reactions! This is terribly important: there is no desire to repress reactions, nor is there a desire to promote reactions.

To say *no* is as good and as bad as to say *yes*. The doors are open, and the wind blows inside. The room is not interested at all in inviting the wind to blow, and the room is not terribly upset by the wind blowing in. Whatever happens, happens. This personality is not to be regarded as distinct and separate from the whole either as the experiencer or as the renouncer, but the personality is itself a small little cell or particle in the cosmic whole.

And when it comes to the side of the expression, it is not I that does. Only as long as the I feels itself to be the doer is there need for it to classify its actions into *this is right action, this is wrong action*. It is then that the actions spring from the *vṛtti*: „I know this to be true, and therefore I'm doing this. I know this to be false, and therefore I'm doing this." My action springs from all this: from right knowledge, from wrong knowledge, from imagination, from sleep, from memory. But when it is seen that the action does not spring from the me and therefore of none of these five psychological categories, when it is seen to be a sheer, pure movement in consciousness, there is *abhyāsa*.

Tatra sthitau yatnaḥ abhyāsaḥ (1.13).

Abhyāsa is unfortunately translated *effort*. But if there is an effort, it doesn't belong to the me. The effort belongs to the movement of energy in consciousness. The movement of energy is energetic, dynamic, and therefore it can also do something. Right, let it do. Even the effort to remain steady in that wisdom or that realization belongs to the movement of energy. And that steady effort to remain established in that consciousness or realization is *abhyāsa*.

„Ah, in which case … Should I practice meditation in the morning or not?" The asker of this question being the I, the question is already wrong. If that energy wants to meditate, let it meditate, let it happen. I do not have to push, I do not have to pull. Does the personality also ask: „And therefore must I remain in bed till nine o'clock? What for?" The intelligence that asks: „Why should I go and meditate?" may also begin to ask: „Why should I stay in bed?" When both these things are seen as something ridiculous and absurd, then the energy takes over and does what it wants to do. It may want to stand on its head – let it! It may want to do some *haṭha* yoga – let it. It may want to go on a fast – let it. All this is valid, there is no suppression there at all, there is no pushing, there is no pulling.

What is eliminated really is what did not exist! It's an extraordinary elimination. The individual personality as an individual, distinct and different from the totality, from the whole, as something that can act independently, as something that can feel independently – that was never in existence, that was never there! How this foolish idea arose, nobody knows. We'll come to that when we discuss *avidyā, ignorance*. How this arose nobody knows, because it never arose, it wasn't there.

Why doesn't anybody come and show you: this is *māyā*, this is *avidyā*, this is ignorance? Both in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* and Ramana Maharshi's teachings, this idea appears again and again: you are talking of ignorance as if it was an existence or reality. This is nonsense! If you say: „I can see the unreality, I can experience the unreal", this means you have made the unreal real. If it is unreal, it cannot be seen, it does not exist. „I'm able to think of it." Of course, you can think of it. And the moment you drop that thinking, it's gone.

Tatra sthitau yatnaḥ abhyāsaḥ. This *abhyāsa* or practice is merely to realize the real to be real. One doesn't have to restrain, pull, push. Its own counterpart is *vairāgya*. *Vairāgya* also means *uncoloredness*. At present I'm looking at what reaches me, I'm looking at all these experiences through some kind of colored lens. Therefore, some experiences appear to be pleasant, and others appear to be unpleasant. Even this doesn't seem to be true for all time. That which was considered pleasant at one stage is considered unpleasant at some other stage, at some other time, in some other mood.

When your own heart and mind are brilliant, delightful, then you find light everywhere in the world. When you are miserable, everything seems to be miserable. You look at this lake and say: „My God, those mountains must have been really miserable, they have been crying, crying, crying all the time …" And *vairāgya* is uncoloredness. Can the mind be persuaded to see the truth that, my friend, these things that happen in the world have nothing whatsoever to do with you, nobody is interested in making you unhappy and nobody at all is interested in making you happy?

That is one important truth that it is good for us to contemplate. We have often told ourselves that „I make you happy" or „you make me happy". This is absurd. Why don't you make me happy at all times? You try to make me happy because you have your own motivation. I try to make you happy because I have my own motivation. It is patently seen in some relationships, it is not so easily seen in other relationships.

True and total unselfishness is possible only for one who has overcome the self, who has ceased to be, in other words. True and total unselfishness is possible only when the individual is not there, merged in the cosmos. When I is not there, when the self is not there at all, then that person seems to be a person only in your eyes; he is not a person anymore. Whatever he does, he does it spontaneously, unselfishly, without expecting anything in return because he – is not there.

Except for these few people, the rest of us are engaged in our own little trips. It's possible that somebody acts 80 per cent selfish and the other person's actions are 20 per cent selfish. It's like two or three of us standing on one side of a big well and arguing amongst ourselves: I can only jump one-fourth of the diameter, she can jump half, and he jumps three-fourths. It doesn't matter, all of us land in the same pitch! You can of course *nearly* make it! It has no value at all.

That yogi`s or sage`s or liberated person`s personality has dissolved in a manner of speaking in the cosmic consciousness, just as those waves which played on the surface of the lake have been withdrawn into the lake. My God, they were the lake even when they were playing on the surface! When the individuality has been seen, realized to be nothing other than cosmos, only he is capable of total unselfishness. The others, we are all looking for some kind of backscratching or other. The experiences can be totally uncolored, say the *Yoga Sūtras*:

> *tat param puruṣa khyāti guṇa vaitṛśṇa* (1.16).

Till then, till that happens:

> *dṛśṭa ānuśravika viśaya vitṛṣṇasya vaśīkāra saṁjñā vairāgyam* (1.15).

What is dispassion? You have had some experience with some object that gave you some sensual pleasure. The experience of pleasure left in your mind by that past experience wants to possess, draw the object to itself so that you can repeat the pleasure whenever you like. It's beautiful, isn't it? Whenever I like, it must be waiting for me. This is unfortunately the problem with domestic situations, too: the husband must be ready, or the wife must be ready to be there whenever and whatever the other person wants.

Why must I enjoy it whenever I like? Why must I not enjoy it whenever it is there? The whole concept of possessing the object of enjoyment is this. It is not that I'm going to enjoy that all the time. That's not possible, then it'll become boring. But I want to possess it so that I can enjoy it whenever I like. This is called *vaśīkāra*. Bring that thing, put it in your cupboard and you don't want to look at it again.

One must try to understand it carefully: a craving arises, and the craving wants to possess the object. Dispassion or *vairāgya* merely means possessing the craving itself, embracing this craving so tightly that it does not function independent of you, independent of that intelligence. That's what that expression literally means: *dṛśṭa ānuśravika viśaya vitṛṣṇasya vaśīkāra saṁjñā*.

Dṛśṭa is *craving*. The craving wants to possess what has been seen or what has been heard, the objects of pleasure. And *vairagya*, the uncoloredness of the wisdom, wants merely to possess this craving so that it does not get out of hand. It behaves as wisdom wants it to behave, so that if that intelligence in you may want to eat a chocolate cake, there is no need to suppress it. But the craving does not eat the chocolate cake, wisdom eats chocolate cake. That's a big difference! If you have understood the difference, you have understood what is called *moderation* at once! Wisdom knows moderation, craving is completely mad.

Whereas craving leads you completely astray, wisdom allows you to graze neatly tethered by restraint, always at the end of the leash, never loose. And this goes on and on, till the totality is realized as the only reality. Then, there is no effort at all, there is no struggle at all: *Tat param puruṣa khyāti guṇa vaitṛśṇa*. Then all action is naturally restrained. When there is no individuality, when there is no conflict between the me and the other, when there is no division between the me and the other and therefore when there is no contact between me and the other, when one alone exists, there is no effort, there is no craving, there is no rejection.

6 The Flight of Birds

When we become aware, when we wake up in the ordinary sense of the word, when the mind begins to function, the I is already there, the individuality is already there. If the individuality is not there at all, then there is no problem, you are free. You have always been free.

In the discussion which follows one must clearly bear that in mind: don't argue from both sides at the same time. From the absolute point of view, there is no duality at all, and the lake, the waves, and then the ripples – the whole thing is one. But we are looking at the waves and we distinguish the wave from the lake. In relation to that wave, there is a there and a here. In relation to that wave, there is this and that, duality. It's only in relation to that personality that the movement of energy in consciousness is experienced from one end and expressed from the other.

Only when it is compared, when it is related to something else, one could say there is motion. That motion itself is undivided, like an x-ray: it passes through, it doesn't care, it's not even aware. So far as the x-ray is concerned, flesh does not exist. The x-ray does not enter this body and leave this body, the x-ray flows through without any let or hindrance.

It is therefore the individuality, the personality, which seems to exist from a certain point of view or plane of understanding, that interprets the movement of energy and consciousness as experience here and expression there. That personality again is depending upon its own conditioning and its own mood. Sweet is not sweet to all beings, and even in the case of those beings to whom sweet is sweet, it is not always sweet. So, the characterization of the experience as pleasant or unpleasant is dependent on two things: one, the predisposition, two, the mood.

It is the personality that receives this movement of energy which it interprets as experience. Otherwise, it's not experience, it's a mere vibration passing through without touching me at all, without bothering me, as if the me were not there. Because the me is set up as something independent, it bothers me, it touches me. And when it touches me, depending on my predisposition and upon my present mood, I call it *pleasant* or *unpleasant*.

When that energy passes through, it becomes action on the other side. It is the same as in physiology: you touch something, and the afferent nerves and efferent nerves react; first there is a sensation carried to the brain through the sensory nerves, and then there is the impulse for action carried to the organ by motoric nerves. That's it. Yoga philosophy is not something far out. It's there, right here. Your expression is my experience. My expression is your experience also, which means, what is expression at one point becomes experience at the other point, the two points being the ends of the same object, the same substance. If that experience is interpreted by you as good, the expression that proceeds from here is considered to be good. Isn't that what goes by *promote the happiness of all beings*? If you're happy, everything that you are doing is good. If you are unhappy, whatever you are doing is evil, never mind what you call it.

Quite simple it is: the characterization of experience and the characterization of expression are entirely dependent upon this me. As long as the me is there, the division will continue to be, the distinctions will continue to be, and the struggle continues to be. Sorrow continues to be; happiness continues to be, unhappiness continues to be, pleasure, pain, all these continue to be. Right, wrong, good, evil, God, Satan, devil, all these come into being as soon as that funny thing has come into being – the me.

How does one overcome this *vṛtti* called *me*? *Abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* are again exactly like this, two sides of the same coin. *Abhyāsa* is related to the expression and *vairāgya* is related to the experience. The experience colors the me and thereby perpetuates the divided experience as pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness. Can I switch that off? That is called *vairāgya*, uncoloredness. *Vairāgya* means not so much *dispassion* as the *absence of passion*. This has led to lots and lots of misunderstandings: „The student of yoga must not be passionate. The mighty yogi is unaware of the world, sleeping."

I've seen a very great living yogi who was dynamic, and whatever he did was with tremendous passion. He spoke with every cell of his being. When he worked, he worked like the Greeks, and the Italians, and the Portuguese. The action was complete, total, every cell, every pore of his being was active. And when he laughed – Swami Sivananda – my God! He had a big paunch, and he would sit there, and the tummy used to vibrate, and his chest used to dance, and the cheeks used to dance, and everything was dancing, tears pouring from his eyes. It was a sight for the Gods to see!

Dispassion is not the absence of such passion. That is suppression, not dispassion. People use this word *negative* in a very non-understanding, ignorant way. *Negative emotion* – what are negative emotions? I have never understood this. Love is supposed to be a positive emotion, jealousy is supposed to be negative. In school, they said: „*No* is negative; *yes* is positive." But jealousy is something very positive! When you say *no* to love and when you say *no* to jealousy, that is negative. Love is positive. Hate is positive, anger is positive, all these are positive things. But „I'm jealous of him. I shouldn't be jealous!" – that is negative, absolutely negative, all bottled-up, I'm not moving at all. Frightened that I might turn to this side and be jealous of him, frightened that I might turn to this side and be caught, trapped, affectionate – that is negative. It's not a fear, fear also is positive! But here, it's suppression, it's a total closure.

If I recognize that, it goes away. If I recognize when I'm jealous of him, if I recognize that he is cleverer than I am, he's brilliant, he's hard-working, he's lucky, and that's why I'm jealous of him, that's perfectly alright. The same jealousy turns into admiration in one-tenth of a second. So, both these are absolutely positive; jealousy and admiration are the same, exactly the same. At one stage I am looking at this side, at other stages I can look at that side.

But I'm told jealousy is evil, Satan, it comes from the devil. Some of the tantric yogis located the devil as something sitting in the left side of your abdomen, hiding itself in your spleen. There is some space, at least, where you can concentrate, the rest of my body is divine! But if even that is not there, you are looking for evil, the devil: he may come from this side, he may come from that side. That is called *negative*.

Passion is life! Passion not in the sexual sense, or this sense or that sense. Passion is life. As your *Bible* says, one must do whatever one does „with all one's heart, all one's soul, with all one's being." (*Matthew* 22:37) It's talking about you! If we can do that, we are yogis all the time. Just for one moment we will go back to the last session, the *bhakti* yoga session. There is a very beautiful, inspiring verse in the *Bhāgavatam* which says: „Never mind what your attitude is towards God. Hate him! But hate with all your being." Not half-heartedly, lukewarm. Hate God, but hate with all your being. Love God, but love with all your being.

It was said that there was someone like Herod in the *New Testament*, a person called Kaṁsa, in the story of Kṛṣṇa. He had been told that Kṛṣṇa would be born to destroy him, that someone would be born who was his death, like in the Jesus story. He tried to kill all children. Kṛṣṇa escaped, and Kaṁsa sent all kinds of demons and demonesses to destroy him. But Kṛṣṇa somehow escaped all that, and then eventually he was coming to the palace, and Kaṁsa felt a bit nervous and couldn't sleep: „Maybe he comes this way. Maybe he comes there ..."

There was a young boy who could deal with such powerful demons and demonesses. What guarantee is there that he may not just take a couple of these blocks and descend from the roof? The scripture says on account of this:

> *apaśyat tanmayam jagat*
> (*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 10.2.24).

The expression used is a yogic expression. *Apaśyat tanmayam jagat*: filled with fear, Kaṁsa saw the entire world as him*,* as Kṛṣṇa. That's meditation, that's already super-consciousness.

We are silly, lukewarm in everything we do. In love we are lukewarm, in hate we are lukewarm. That total absorption is not there, passion. So, passion is not what we consider passion to be. That is why again the Christians call the final drama of Christ's life *passion*, Christ's passion. It's the whole being filled with energy, and the energy moving naturally without any obstruction whatsoever, without any *no* whatsoever, anywhere in the inner being. That's called *passion*.

Can the energy function from head to foot without any let or hindrance, without any *no*, then it is passion. *Vairagya* is unfortunately translated into *dispassion*. One can say so, it's no harm, provided that we understand what we are talking about. *Vairagya* also means *uncoloredness*: Can all experiences come and go without leaving a trace?

This again has been very beautifully described in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* by „the flight of birds". As birds fly, unlike fish swimming or boats plowing through water, it does not leave a mark at all. Can all experiences behave in this way? Can this me be so transparent that it does not hold anything, it doesn't receive an impression? Because when it receives an impression, it acquires a predisposition or habit, a *vāsanā*, a *saṃskāra*. Then like a photographic filters, the *saṃskāra* acts like a filter. It goes looking for those experiences: such experiences are welcome; other experiences are unwelcome.

If that experience had been allowed to pass through the transparent me, then no impression gets formed, no *saṃskāra* is formed, no groove is formed. There is no filter, and all light continues to flow through this without being obstructed. When the groove, the *saṃskāra*, the filter is formed, it invites only certain experiences and rejects certain other experiences. Pleasure and pain have come into being. And therefore, as long as the me is there, pleasure and pain cannot be avoided.

Kṛṣṇa says, pleasure and pain exist in this world. Yes, they do. But this is only as long as the me exists. When the me exists, pleasure and pain also exist, happiness, unhappiness also exist. *Vairāgya* is the antithesis of this whole show. On the other side, the same thing is *abhyāsa*. It is the energy that goes out, that acts, not me. It is the same cosmic energy that is in constant motion that is functioning there. When that is seen, there is *abhyāsa*. *Abhyāsa* is the practice of the awareness of the non-existence of me, constantly.

Patañjali then continues: this *abhyāsa* can be intense at times, and when it is not intense, it can be warm, it can be lukewarm, it can be cold. When it's cold, dull-witted, it's not *abhyāsa* anymore. If only when I'm in a religious atmosphere I feel inspired, that means that there is otherwise no inspiration at all. I'm cold, refrigerated. However, Patañjali also recognizes that this kind of lukewarm practice is slightly better than no practice. It's only from that point of view even the routine practices like just getting up from your bed and come to sit in meditation are helpful. I feel dull, sleepy – alright, sleep there. Try not to snore. What are you going to do otherwise? Otherwise, you are going to sleep in bed. Sit down, it doesn't hurt. In this way you may be able to cut a new groove. As the groove becomes deeper, it is possible – not inevitable – that the *abhyāsa* or the practice may gain momentum.

The *abhyāsa* may take the form of what has been described as *samādhi*.

> *Vitarka vicārānandāsmitā rupānugamāt saṁprajñātaḥ* (*YS* 1.17).

What is *abhyāsa* and what course does it follow? I'll give you the meaning word by word: *Vitarka* means *sound reasoning* or *logic*; your practice may be accompanied by sound reasoning or logic. *Vicāra* has been translated to mean *inquiry*, but *cāra* is *to move*. *Vi-* as a prefix has got two meanings, one diametrically opposed to the other. It can be *efficient movement*, or the opposite of movement, the negation of movement. Most commentators have taken that to mean *proper and well-directed movement* or *inquiry. Ānanda* is *joy*. *Asmitā* is mere *I am-ness*.

Saṁprajñātaḥ is translated as a *samādhi in which there is awareness*. *Full awareness* means awareness of the subject-object division. That practice where investigation or argumentation, inquiry, joy, happiness and pure I am-ness still exist, is *saṁprajñātaḥ*, a state of contemplation in which there is full awareness.

The problem is: what is this me that obstructs the free flow of energy, that obstructs the free flow of life-force and that seems to divide experiences and expressions, that seems to divide consciousness into *here and there*, into *me and you* – what is this I, what is this me? What do I do, how do *I* meditate? That is the big problem: how do I meditate? What do you become aware of immediately you start the meditation? The mind is still working, that is: you are still thinking. You know what *thin-king* means? Not a *fat king*! I find myself thinking; not that I want to think, but I find myself thinking. What else do you

want me to do? – I'm thinking all the time. Patañjali says: „Don't get worked up, start there." Use it! Don't let it use you. Get hold of it and steer it, but please remember, you are practicing yoga, which means: give it a direction, straight, head-on! Don't let the mind go on rambling: „Ah, it's useless, it's useless thinking of this, so let me think of that."

The mind is capable of tricking in a very remarkable way, a reason why some, including Patañjali, insisted upon single-minded devotion to a single technique, to a single teaching. This comes later in the same *Yoga Sūtras*: how do I overcome obstacles?

Tat pratiṣedhārtham eka tattvābhyāsaḥ (1.32).

You can overcome all obstacles if you adhere to one method, or one truth, adhere to one path, one way: *eka tattvābhyāsaḥ*. It can also be interpreted to mean to you get hold of one idea. When you start saying: „Oh no, it's not a distraction, it's all God", *that* is a distraction. Avoid it.

For instance, I'm jealous of him, again. And I start: „What is the jealousy and how does it arise in me? – Oh no, Mahātma So-and-so told me, such inquiry is waste of time: ‚You must see God!'". You have wasted a very precious opportunity. The jealousy was there. Get hold of it, make use of it! Squeeze it and get some use out of it, don't waste it. The mind can play this trick. It starts this inquiry, based upon reasoned thinking, well-directed logic, but suddenly it cuts in and says: „No, jealousy is evil! Go drop it and see God in him" – gone, the meditation is gone. And therefore, this *eka tattvābhyāsaḥ* can also mean: never mind whether it's called *good* or it's called *evil*, get hold of it and squeeze it.

„I'm afraid of him." First, there is thought: „I'm afraid of him. Am I afraid of him or do I think I'm afraid of him? I only think I am afraid of him. What makes me think that I'm afraid of him? Oh, I see he's a very strong, he is a very powerful man, he is a very wealthy man, he's got a gun." Please, follow this a little carefully; it might come true: „He's got a gun, and he is very powerful, very strong. And his wife told me that he hates me. So, I'm afraid of him." But for him and but for his gun you will live forever, won't you? – „No, but I may live for some more time." All this is happening within me. Aha, so living for some more time, you think, is better than dying now? Now you're healthy; one bullet and you're finished. Why wither away and become old and weak? Isn't this better? „But I may live for some more time."

For every thought, you present a counter-thought. Then logic comes to an end, and that is called *logical conclusion*. *Logical conclusion* means the point at which logic comes to an end and says: „No. There's no sense in it. Ah, so fear is not logical but psychological, ah, I see. Maybe slightly biological; but mostly psychological." There is no more logic. It is then that it is possible for you to look straight through. And that is called *vicāra*. *Vicāra* is when this conscious energy or the energy that is consciousness is able to move directly towards this *tattva* or this factor. This factor is fear. I'm no longer arguing within myself, I'm no longer thinking, but I am directly looking at it within myself.

Now the question is: what is this fear? Non-verbally, without any verbal description the whole energy, the whole attention moves towards the fear within to discover it, to see: „What are you?", to touch it – not to analyze it. One must be able to touch this fear, smell it: „What are you?" There is no argument, there is no logic. And probably there are no words used, but direct looking. That is *vicāra*, inquiry. Inquiry

does not necessarily involve logical reasoning. It may start with logical reasoning, but it must go into direct perception, direct understanding.

And then that end is fear and then this end is me. Why did they call it *fear* in the first place? It's me. It's crazy, the fear is gone, there's a great joy, *ānanda*, *vitarka vicāra ānanda*. There is no fear at all now, but there is great joy when one discovers that what one called *fear* was nothing other than me itself at the other end. One end was the me, the other end was called *fear*. Because here you realize: if the me was not there, there is no fear either.

You've still not come to the me, you are still looking at the fear. But the fear is now slowly transformed into vapor, being vaporized by the heat of this inquiry, and there is great joy, the joy of discovering that the fear was non-different from me. Fear was non-different from me. That fear has gone and there is joy in its place, and the joy is non-different from me, means: I am.

There you stop. Strangely, there is still an intense awareness of *I am* which means, there is somewhere a division. Therefore, *samādhi* at that stage is known as *saṁprajñātaḥ-samādhi*. *Saṁprajñātaḥ* is when there is this awareness involving a certain duality.

One goes on practicing in this manner, utilizing every opportunity possible to get back to this. It doesn't matter what the starting point looks like. It may be a painful experience, it may be a pleasurable experience, it may be a so-called evil emotion. Good thought, bad thought, evil thought, stray thought – all that one needs is this inner discipline that goes straight on, head-on, and not deviate.

Then one invariably comes to this, the core, that is the *I-am* consciousness. There is still awareness and there is still division. In all this, there is a certain amount of effort. A certain amount of effort:

> *virāma pratyaya abhyāsa pūrvaḥ saṁskāra śeṣo 'nyaḥ* (YS 1.18).

When this practiced for a considerable time with great zeal, then even the effort is dispensed with. There is practice without effort, effortless practice. As soon as an experience arises, at the same time meditation arises also, which means: as soon as there is fear, the inquiry into its nature also arises, the observation of its nature also arises. As soon as there is jealousy, the observation also comes up, the inquiry also comes up.

7 The Heart Approach

The approach that was suggested in the previous few *sūtra*s needs a certain psychological discipline. It needs an inner discipline to be able to ruthlessly cut down all thoughts with counter-thoughts. Especially when it comes to *vicāra*, the state where there is no argumentation but straight movement, it needs tremendous psychological discipline to keep the mind from straying, and then we end up in a vicious circle: if I cannot control the mind, I cannot do *vicāra*, and if I cannot do *vicāra,* I cannot control the mind.

If you are emotional, if your heart rules your head, the *vicāra* approach may be very difficult. The whole technique, if it can be called so, may rejected by the heart as dry. Some people want their heart, hands and feet to be put to work. In their case, neither this nor that is going to be of any use, they must be working, doing something. So, one has to look within and see.

I have to look within and see, gauge for myself which method I should adapt, but that is precisely the problem. I cannot look within myself. I do not know what's going on. I prefer to think that I am like Ramana Maharshi, I am like Buddha, just waiting for enlightenment. I close my eyes, I enter into deep sleep and think that is meditation – how do I know what's going on?

That's where again we run into this guru-business. Somebody else may be of some help to you at some time, at least to enunciate the rules of the game. The other person, the guru or whoever it is, is not going to play the game for you; then it is his game, not yours. It is possible that the guru or the teacher may be able to indicate the rules of the game, that's all.

For instance, you may pick up a book of Ramana Maharshi and just read one little thing, that in *samādhi* the head is erect and in sleep the head is down. This may or may not be the perfect answer, but I have some indication that there is some difference between *samādhi* and sleep. So after two hours of tremendous, fantastic meditation, if I find my head is still like this, maybe it was meditation, maybe. If it was sleep – okay, next time! That's where the guidance of a teacher or a guru may become useful.

What is the heart approach? That's the next series.

> *Īśvara praṇidhānād vā* (1.23).

How does one overcome the *vṛtti*s – all these, all these, all these, including the fundamental *vṛtti* of *I am*, *I am* as independent, the wave as totally independent of the lake? The wave as the lake is lake. The wave as lake is lake, not wave. The wave as a concept is a concept, not lake, not wave. The wave as something in itself is non-existent.

There is some kind of light shining somewhere. The wave is not unreal, of course it's there; what do you mean *it's unreal*? But while seeing the wave, while looking at the wave, I'm really and truly looking at the lake, not the wave. Yes, no, yes – no.

The wave as a wave is purely a concept. A certain formation on the surface of the lake is called *wave*. It's called, right, it's named, it's a name, it's a word. So, the *vṛtti* is non-different from the total mind. How do

I get rid of the false concept? One method is *vicāra*. Another method: *īśvara praṇidhānād vā* – by total, dynamic, passionate surrender to *īśvara*, which is translated as *God*; by total, dynamic, passionate surrender, not a dull, passive action, but full-blooded, energetic surrender, so that in that surrender there is no withholding.

We all do partial self-surrender to one another. Partial self-surrender is not self-surrender. Like some people answer the question: „Are you vegetarian?" by saying: „Yes, sometimes." That doesn't make you a vegetarian in the definition of the word. In the same way, truth: „Usually I'm honest," or: „Most of the time I'm non-violent." It won't do, especially in the case of self-surrender: either it is total, or it is not at all! *Īśvara praṇidhānād vā* is total self-surrender. The moment you think of that total self-surrender, a number of questions arise. But those questions do not arise in the case of one whose heart rules the mind.

Ramana Maharshi's teachings of self-surrender make it look very much like a process. Even while talking of self-surrender, he says: „First of all, find out who you are and who God is," but, well, if I have that psychological discipline, then there is no need even for surrender, surrender happens.

Īśvara praṇidhānād is slightly different: I'm unable to discipline the mind, I am unable to do *vicāra*. A unidirectional motion of the mind, movement of the mind in one direction, is *brahmacarya*. I'm incapable of this unidirectional motion of attention, it seems to be disturbed by emotional states. Then suddenly I see that perhaps if the same truth is approached through the heart, it's possible to arrive at the same point.

Here, *īśvara praṇidhānād vā* might mean the whole system called *bhakti* yoga. I may take up any form of *bhakti*, any form of devotional practice, anything that appeals to the heart and moves the heart to offer myself totally to this God – whoever it is, whatever it is; we'll come to that God in a minute. *Īśvara praṇidhāna* is a dynamic, active approach – an emotional person is more active than the intellectual person. He has to express the emotion in one way or other, singing, dancing, working, all the time feeling: all this is for God, I'm not doing anything for me, all this is for God.

When he sings *kīrtan* and when he does *japa*, he's dynamic, he's jumping around. It may be distracting to you. Your type of meditation is dull and sleepy as far as he is concerned, his type of jumping around is distracting as far as you are concerned, so the two of you have different manners. But as Ramana Maharshi points out, the end result, or even the penultimate result, is the same. Whereas in the *vicāra* approach you discovered that the division in thought, the anxiety, the fear and all the rest of it are unreal, I alone exists, in this emotional approach, you are not seriously concerned about the I and *who is I?* and so on. You start on a different footing, saying God alone exists, *īśvara* alone: God created all this. Who created me? God created me. Who is sustaining this? God sustains all this.

Only a little bit of intellectual understanding is needed here, and that is quite simple. Why do I say: „This is all God's grace, this is all God's will"? Because I don't know anything. This much I know; this is almost Sunday school or elementary lesson. One has to ask only one or two simple questions and the answer is

always: „I don't know". How is it that a cow drinks water and gives milk, and a bull drinks water and doesn't give milk? That's it – I don't know. One little question and the answer is „I don't know".

The devotee takes that step quickly, he doesn't go a bit round the bush, straight on: „How does the sun hang up there? God keeps it there." *God keeps it there* means: I don't know, I don't keep it there, I'm not responsible for this. Here again, one has to be persistent. Try not to slip out here, try not to slip out there. If you can do this persistently for three days, you are enlightened.

Whatever happens, you must be able to say: „Oh, it's God's will," or God's grace – whatever happens, don't sneak halfway; as long as it is comfortable for me: „Oh, it's God's will," and when something uncomfortable happens „Oh no, she did something funny". No, nothing at all: persistent to say that it is God's will. It's obvious: one who is able to say that has already pushed the ego-sense away, the *vṛtti* away. In all that happens, in all these waves and crosscurrents, he is able to see the hand of God.

Therefore, this method is as effective as the previous method and can also be used independently of the previous one. You may have no intellectual equipment, intellectual accomplishment for the *vicāra* method at all, by this method also you arrive at the same place, instantly. Patañjali says that *īśvara praṇidhāna* or dynamic surrender to God enables me to overcome all this and to see all movement of energy in consciousness as God's will, or God's grace, or God.

If that is so, who is this God?

Kleśa karma vipākāśayair aparāmṛṣṭaḥ puruṣa viśeṣa īśvaraḥ (1.24).

What is God? God is not a lovely little deity stuck in the middle of your chest, but God is *puruṣa viśeṣa*. These are some Sanskrit expressions which are beautiful and slippery. *Puruṣa* means *man*. *Puruṣa* also means the cosmic person in whose body millions of universes float. If you take that word apart: *puri* means *city*, a *town*. One who rests in that city is called *puruṣa*. One who rules that city, the king of the city is also called *puruṣa*. He rules a remarkable city, which is described as *nine-gated*, *navadvarapuri dehi.* Nine-gated city refers to the body which has nine exits. They are not entrances, but they are exits, nine apertures, nine holes. One who is the inner ruler of all beings, that's the *puruṣa*.

But the *sūtra* says that it is the *puruṣa viśeṣaḥ*. *Śeṣa* means *what remains*. *Śeṣa* is the residue, and *śeṣa* also means *snake*, the serpent. Viṣṇu sleeps on *adhiśeṣa*, and that *śeṣa* is a serpent. If all these things are spread out in front of us and you are able to look at them as you look at the several pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, then you can assemble and see something very beautiful there: the lord sleeps on the *śeṣa, śeṣa* is *what remains*. What remains after what? *Viśeṣa*: this *puruṣa*, the inner ruler of this psycho-physical organism, how do I find out who it is? By seeing what remains. After what? After you have been eliminating all that is not the reality.

When you have eliminated all that is not the *puruṣa* or the inner reality, what remains is the *puruṣa.* That is, symbolically, what we do when we cut our hair: shave your hair and you see your scalp, peel your scalp off and then you see your skull, break your skull, you see the brain. Symbolically again, the naked monks exactly do the same thing. When you peel off your clothes, they really didn't mean the outer

clothes, they meant the inner clothes, the inner coverings. But the inner coverings are a bit difficult to peel off, the outer coverings are easier, especially when the climate is warm.

This truth or the reality or God does not have any clothes on. It's not covered. It's good to remember that: God or the reality does not come draped. You are unable to see, you are unwilling to see the reality, and therefore you put on the clothes, you drape this God in lovely garments. And when you want to see the real nature of God, you take these things away one by one: *puruṣa viśeṣaḥ*.

You look at God: what does God mean to you? What does God mean to me? Means: what do I like to regard God to be? What is my concept of God? Ah, my God, I'm so big that I can conceive of God! I'm covering that God with my own conception. Having started from there, now peel off.

Why? For the simple reason that God is untouched. *Kleśa karma vipākāśayair aparāmṛṣṭaḥ puruṣa viśeṣa īśvaraḥ*: God is not influenced or affected by what you as a limited individual seem to be affected. Fear, sorrow, grief, stupidity, ignorance, all these things do not exist in this God. That is why you can approach him, surrender yourself to him and be freed from your own limitations. This God is unlimited, unconditioned, and therefore by surrendering myself totally to this God, I also become unconditioned. I also becomes unconditioned.

The wave as the wave is subject to being disturbed by the wind that rustles the surface of the lake, and the moment the wave merges in the lake, it is no longer capable of being ruffled. Once the wave subsides, merges in the ocean, it is free.

I is conditioned, I is limited, and therefore I is subjected to all this fear, anxiety, and jealousy, and *īśvara* is the totality, it is what remains after all these conditions have been dropped away, peeled off, *viśeṣaḥ*. But this, again, is merely asserted by the devotee. He does not intellectualize all this. He contemplates God, he knows God is omnipresent, omniscient, *Oṁ*; he`s omnipresent, he's unconditioned, he's infinite, he's that, he's that supreme bliss. To that God, I surrender myself. When the I is surrendered in that manner to that omnipresent, omnipotent, infinite being, there is freedom, instant freedom, as long as the surrender is complete and total.

There is a lovely little story told, I'm sure all of us have heard it, it's current in all traditions. There was a king and his minister, they used to go hunting on the weekend. One morning they were having breakfast, and the king was cutting an apple. The royal knife was a bit too sharp, and he cut a chip off, a bit of his finger. The minister was a philosopher and he said: „Ah, it's good for your majesty, it`s God`s will." The king got furious, had him arrested, taken away. As he was being handcuffed and pulled off from the royal presence, he said: „This is good for me. No problem, it's God's will."

The king went alone hunting. There were a few bandits in that forest who had taken a vow that if one of their robberies turned out successful, they would offer a human sacrifice to Kālī. The robbery was successful, and they were looking for a human being to sacrifice. They walked into this king; they got hold of him. He was alone and they were many, so meekly he walked to the temple: „The time is up."

Before he could be sacrificed, he had to be bathed ceremonially. He was stripped, and as the priest was pouring water on his head to bathe him, he came to see the bandage. He said: „What is that?" „Oh, I cut myself this morning." The priest gave him one resounding slap: „Get out! You are unfit to be sacrificed! Something which has already been cut cannot be offered in sacrifice to the Goddess." And he said: „Thank you very much. You can hit me again if you want to."

He jumped on the horse and raced towards his palace. On the way he remembered: „My God, that fellow said so, ‚that's good for you'. And indeed, but for this little accident I would have lost my life today". He went straight to the cell, released this minister, and said: „Thank you very much. What you said proved right! But tell me, there is one thing which is puzzling me. I unjustly had you arrested and you said it's good for you. Can you rationalize that thing also?" The minister said: „Obvious. If you would not have locked me up here, I would have come with you!"

What happens in our own life may not be so dramatical and easy to see, but it's true. If you have that perseverance in seeing the divine in everything that happens, then you are liberated. Since the divine that is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent is not involved in *kleśa karma*, total surrender to that, to the divine, is another way of freeing oneself from the *vṛttis*.

How does one overcome this *karma*? In the case of yogis, says Patañjali, *karma*s or actions are neither black nor white:

trividham itareṣām (4.7).

Whatever the yogi does is neither good nor evil, because he doesn't have a sense of doership. Whatever happens to him happens by God's grace, whatever he's able to do is also God's will, God's grace, completely and totally, there is no ego-sense at all. What he does has no focal point for the *karma* to rebound. The *karma* rebounds to you only as long as the ego-sense projects it, otherwise it's lost in infinity.

What happens in the infinite does not happen. In God, there is no *karma.* It is only in relation to a finite point that one assumes that there is also a finite goal. A movement in the cosmos, in the infinite is no movement, a motion is motion only in relation to something else. If that something else is not there, there is no motion. *Karma* is *karma* only in relation to something else. An action returns as reaction only as long as the starting point is a stationary point. If action springs from the infinite, it's non-action. In God there is no *karma,* nor is there *kleśa*.

Kleśa is psychological distress, emotional upheaval, emotional trauma, fear, anxiety, jealousy, sorrow, grief, unhappiness, misery, all this; life and death. All these things do not affect God. God is not subject to any of these because of the absence of the ego-sense. Movement of energy in consciousness is interpreted as happiness and unhappiness, pleasure and pain only by that ego-sense. If you are not standing outside when a freezing wind is blowing, there is no one to say that it's freezing. Space does not say it is freezing, wind does say it is freezing.

Therefore, there is neither *kleśa* or distress nor *karma,* action and reaction, in the infinite. All these are merely interpretations of the ego-sense, of the movement of energy in consciousness.

Tatra niratiśayaṃ sarvajña bījam (1.25).

It's beautiful: he merely says *tatra*, *in that.* Maybe in that surrender itself! Or maybe in God. It's a *sūtra*, it's a laconic expression which one has to interpret according to one's own light. *Tatra* – once you have surrendered yourself in that itself, or in God, there is none of the shame that we give to each other. It's a super-wonderful omniscience. One who has surrendered to God is omniscient.

„Where did I put my finger-*mālā*? Is there somebody omniscient here?" That is not the type of omniscience they referred to. Omniscience means knowing all things at the same time, knowing the ground of all things at the same time, knowing the reality or becoming that reality instantly. Which in fact only means that in that person there is no confusion.

When the ego-sense is completely surrendered, when the basic *vṛtti* of *I am* is totally surrendered and when it merges in the infinite, all the confusions and all the divisions brought about by its assumed independence are immediately redressed. It is not omniscience in relation to something else, another event. It is not an interpretation. It's an instantaneous dissolution of all confusion, of all doubt, of all questioning, of all quest.

What is this God, what is this God called, and how do I call upon this God, and how do I link myself, how do I tune myself, how do I contact this God?

Tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ (1.27).

His form has been described. What is the form? That which remains after everything, all the unreality, has been eliminated, peeled off, *neti-neti, neti-neti*: *not this, not this, not this, not this*. When all the mental concepts and all the trappings have been pulled away, what remains is God. If that is abundantly clear, then we can go on to the naming aspect. What is God called, so that I may, I may call him by his proper name? Oh, God has no name, says Patañjali. *Tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ*: it is merely indicated by *Oṁ*.

God's presence is indicated by *Oṁ*. When you listen to any undifferentiated sound, it is *Oṁ*. The sound in which the mind does not create a division in terms of all these words and concepts and so on, when all these blend into one homogeneous sound, that is *Oṁ*. And that is there everywhere all the time. That's the *vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ*. This sound is everywhere all the time! It's not absent from anywhere at any time. If you stick your thumbs into your ears, you hear this. But then someone says: „Oh no, no; that's just your capillary blood circulation". This is where the differentiation has started, the confusion has started.

One must learn to listen to this sound, feeling that this is the name of God, because this section deals with the emotional approach, or the devotional approach to the same truth. Therefore, no thinking is allowed here, no rationalization is allowed, and no condemnation is allowed, no criticism is allowed. It's a pure heart-to-heart relationship.

How do I use this *Oṁ*?

Taj-japaḥ tad artha bhāvanam (1.28).

Go on repeating it. Why must I repeat it? For the simple reason that the first time I uttered it or heard it, it didn't click, thus I repeat it. If it clicked and if you attained enlightenment, you don't have to say it again. The mantra has dropped away, it has served its purpose.

Taj-japaḥ tad artha bhāvanam. The second is even more important: repeat the mantra *Oṁ*, but at the same time contemplating the *artha*. *Artha* is difficult to translate. *Artha* does not mean *paraphrase*, *artha* is not a verbal equivalent, a dictionary meaning, but *artha* means *substance*. *Artha* is the substance, is the object, the thing denoted by the word.

My schoolmaster used to tell me a lovely little story of the uselessness of using words to understand words. There used to be many postal tuition centers in England in those days, and they used to send round postal lessons to young people in India who could take some kind of degree by postal tuition. A young boy was taking postal lessons, studying civics. In one lesson he came across the word *county*. First, he thought there was spelling mistake, and it should read *country*, but the same word occurred again and again, which made him feel that probably there is something called *county*.

What do I do? Look it up in a dictionary! He pulled out the dictionary, turned a few pages, came to the word *county*: „Coun-ty. noun. Meaning: Shire". *County* means *shire*. At least, *county* seemed to be a spelling mistake, now *shire* is a totally unknown word! Okay, never mind, go on. He turned a few more pages and came to *shire*: „Shire", the dictionary said, „noun. Meaning: county". *County* means *shire*, *shire* means *county*. Now what do you know about *county*?

This is what happens when one finds a word meaning for another word. When you paraphrase an expression, it leaves you cold except that you have a lot more words, so that all these words create such a heavy burden on the brain that it cannot bear any more and it thinks it knows. That is not what the Sanskrit word *artha* means. The Sanskrit word *artha* means *meaning* in the sense that if a handkerchief is shown to you, you know the meaning of the word *handkerchief* immediately, directly. In the same way, you are repeating the mantra *Oṁ*, contemplating what it actually means.

And thereby you have come to the very essence of meditation. One may adopt from here on any method one likes: as I'm repeating this mantra, where does the mantra happen? What is the sound? How is the sound produced, or how is it possible for the sound to be heard at all? These steps end in that cosmic intelligence again.

Whichever be the path we may chose, whichever be the technique we adopt, we come to the same goal, in just a couple of steps. That's why it's called *rāja* yoga.

If one repeats the mantra *Oṁ* in the prescribed manner, this includes and involves contemplation of the substance, or the reality indicated by it.

This is a game you can play as often as you like: name an object and see that the substance or the meaning of the name is the object: *tree* – that is tree; this is a blackboard, it's a green-board; this is a man – without defining, without getting into more words: this is a photographic camera – without getting into more words at all, straight, head-on, playing around that within. When that is extended further, more and more: *happiness* – … You are stuck.

It is then that you are looking into your mind. These are all objects which are easily identified by saying a word, but when it comes to *happiness*, *pain*, *sorrow*, *love*, *God*, the mind begins to paraphrase because it has learned from books: happiness is so-and-so.

So, when they say that *taj-japaḥ tad artha bhāvanam* (*Yoga Sūtras* 1.28), what is meant is not to conjure up another set of images: I'm repeating *Oṁ*, and *Oṁ* has been defined in some books as *the infinite*, *the omniscient*, *omnipotent*, *omnipresent*, *the name of God*, *the almighty*, *all-compassionate*, *all-merciful*. If you don't understand this, they are useless words.

You go on rattling off all those words – use less words! If you are not convinced, the words are useless. The words, which are otherwise used, are useless. All the *veda*s are condensed into this little thing called *Oṁ*. Why do you want to expand it again into those volumes and volumes? So, when that is done, you are looking straight into your own mind.

Every time a verbal concept arises – knock it down? No, that's not what I'm looking for. I'm looking for this: the meaning, which means the substance.

Tataḥ pratyak cetana adhigamo antarāya abhavaśca (1.29).

Why does one repeat *Oṁ*, do *japa* at all, contemplating the reality or the truth or the substance of it? *Tataḥ pratyak adhigamo*: the mind is turned upon itself, on the intelligence that is its own substance and powerfully focused on it: *antarāya abhavaśca*. It's a beautiful expression: the total absence of obstacles – not *removal* of obstacles. „An obstacle has appeared" means that you have created it. You have recognized it, you have given it recognition. That is: you have clothed it with your own substance.

The obstacle exists only because you have recognized it. Having bestowed recognition upon it, kicking this is of no use. Removing it by clinging to it is again of no use: „Oh, I don't want to think about this, I don't want to think about this …" You're thinking about it! That's the worst of self-deceptions. What does one do when such a thing happens? „Drop it and look at something else! Don't try to fight with it", that's what Swami Sivananda used to say very often. Instead of looking here, where there is distraction, look at something else. Change the subject.

You've heard that, haven't you: *change the subject*? Here, it doesn`t mean: instead of talking of yoga, talk of potato chips. What is thought of is the object. So don't change that! That object is totally

innocent. You called it, it came. Forget about all that, change the subject! Look at something else, do something else.

Have you ever been bothered by the same thought, going round and round, and you can`t get rid of it? The first thing to do immediately is to get out. If that thought occurred to you when you were sitting on a chair: don't sit on the chair! Get into the bathtub. If the water in the bathtub is not hot enough to evaporate it or sort of boil it: get up, walk around, so that looking at the trees, at the lake, at the mountain or at something else brings about a change in the subject itself, in me.

If you are Ramana Maharshi or a Buddha, you can look straight into that horrible thought and say: „My God, where did it come from?" If at present you do that, it might say: „I'm you. Don't you recognize me?" If it's a vicious thought, it might turn round and say: „What do you mean, where do I come from? You and I are one – I'm you, you're me. You are the resistance." It collapses. Change the subject completely. A radical change must be brought about in the subject; that is what *changing the subject* means.

If that is not possible, have a nice glass of yogurt or something, go to bed, sleep. Sleep is meant only for that. When I'm excited, when this thing goes on and on and the obstacle has arisen, I have created it, and I'm feeding it, feeding it both ways – feeding it by hugging it, feeding it by kicking it – both ways I'm being in contact. Without being in contact, you can neither touch it nor kick it, neither drive it nor draw it yourself. Doing either of these in relation to an obstacle which has been created by the mind, recognized by the mind, restored to recognition by the mind – it's of no use. The best thing to do is to walk around, tire the body so that it asks for sleep, and sleep.

And when you get up, don't start saying: „That obstacle has gone! The devil has gone". It'll come back! Instead of reminding yourself to forget and instead of saying that the obstacle has gone, when you start a new day, start it as a new day. It's a completely new day. What yesterday was, I don't know. When *japa* is done in accordance with this prescription, when the mantra is repeated and at the same time you are looking for what it represents, its truth, its reality, then the obstacles do not exist.

The obstacles do not arise at all. And if some obstacle arises when I have already commenced *japa* and this contemplation, the obstacle itself becomes an indicator of what is happening where, when, how. I'm thinking of the mantra, I'm contemplating its meaning, I'm trying to investigate its meaning: what is this *Oṁ*? How does it arise? What is the mantra? What is it made of, where does it happen? All of them refer to the same thing. When I'm doing that, I'm thinking of that. What else is there in me to think of something else? The mantra and its truth, the reality that it indicates are what I am thinking of, seriously.

If there is an unruly, disturbing, distracting, destructive thought, I'm not asking: „How could this arise?" I'm interested only in this, I'm not interested in that; interest meaning *to be in*, *inter-est*. I am in this mantra, I'm looking at that. I'm not looking at the distraction. Because if I look at the distraction, I want it. I jump onto that boat. I don't want it; I'm looking at the truth implied by the mantra. There is a pull which I can feel. If you have ever gone into a river with lots and lots of fish and felt them nibbling at your

legs all around, that is exactly the feeling when you are doing *japa*, when other thoughts come and nibble around. Alright! I'm doing this *japa* and I'm contemplating that meaning.

Aha! If you don't pay attention to that seriously, they go away. If they are powerful enough to distract you, it means you call them into existence. You recognize them, you have asked for them, now it's up to you: what do you want?

Antarāya abhavaśca: if I keep focusing all my attention on this mantra and its meaning, the obstacles do not exist. Either they do not arise, or they do not disturb me, distract me. Once you have the psychological strength, the inner strength, spiritual strength, it is easy for you to step on that obstacle or distraction and make it a steppingstone. After all, the distracting thought is in me. I am the distracting thought.

With the same intensity with which you are doing the *japa* and the contemplation, you can turn onto the distracting thought, track it to its root and find that this is the same as that. There are no two intelligences in me, one divine that is repeating the mantra and the other diabolical which is thinking this dreadful thought. It's the same intelligence!

Developing the ability to pierce through needs some amount of initial training and discipline. Don`t jump into that, treating it as a boat, but split through it. If you are able to split through the mantra and see the truth in it, you will in the same manner be able to split through the most diabolical thought and see that there are no two entities in this thing called *me*, one is something divine and the other something diabolical. The energy is the same, exactly the same. When there is one mood, I call it *divine*, when there is another mood, I call it *diabolical*.

These three distinct stages must be understood: when you repeat the mantra, first you are not distracted at all. As you feel the nibbling, your zeal or your concentration are intensified: „Oh, I'm being threatened, and I mustn't look at this threat!" Thirdly, when you're strong, you can even look at the distraction, go right through it, and find the same truth: *tataḥ pratyak cetana adhigamo antarāya abhavaśca*.

What are obstacles? Patañjali gives a very long list. They can all be reduced to a few fundamental distractions. It is interesting that *disease* must head the list, *vyādhi* (1.30). Disease of body and mind, dullness, doubt, all these are obstacles. A kind of complaisance that I have reached: „I'm progressing", that's also an obstacle, *alabdha bhūmikatva* (1.30).

I'm searching and searching without ever finding a foothold. I haven't been able to strike root in anything. I'm all branches and no roots. That's another obstacle. Sometimes I think I have caught root, I think I have found a foothold, but it slips.

All these are obstacles. Why are they obstacles? What are obstacles?

Citta vikṣepāḥ te antarāyāḥ (1.30):

All these things distract the mind, prevent the understanding of the mind. If you understand their close relationship in that context, then you immediately realize when an obstacle becomes an obstacle.

The yogi does not look for a life without disease. This is ridiculous, impossible. The body has to undergo some change and at some stage the change that the body naturally undergoes is unfortunately called a *disease*. It's not a disease, it's the body cleansing itself! Certain changes take place in the body; we are not concerned with that. Some of those changes are considered by some people as illness. Headache is a nuisance. But when is it a nuisance? Only when it distracts the attention and prevents you from pursuing this self-knowledge. If an ailment, a cold, a headache or rheumatism or arthritis afflicts only the body and not the mind, it is not a disease, it is not a distraction, and it is of no consequence to the yogi, it can remain.

Many yogis and mystics have described hunger and thirst as the worst forms of illness. You will never get rid of them; half an hour after death, till then you're hungry! That's not what he is looking for. If the illness afflicts only the body and not the mind, then it can be there as it likes. Therefore, disease is undesirable, is an obstacle only to the extent it impairs the mental faculties.

In exactly the same way, *alabdha bhūmikatva*: I've not been able to strike a root. I'm still confused and I'm still wandering. That means, the mind is nowhere. It doesn't mean that you must get caught in one kind of dogma or doctrine. To the extent that it promotes distractedness of the mind it's an obstacle. If I can strike a root somewhere, I've got what Swami Sivananda used to call a *background of thought*. I've got that, a mantra, a *japa*. Fixed to that, I roam around. Rooted there, I can branch out, cover the whole world with these branches.

Those obstacles are obstacles only because the mind is completely out of control. Anything that throws the mind out of here is an obstacle.

In the next *sūtra,* it seems to be not quite clear: is it possible for us to recognize when the mind is thus distracted? Because it is not always possible for the distracted mind to recognize its own distraction. And if you are not living with a master, or someone who can guide you, help you, how it is possible for me to recognize my own distraction, the distractedness of my own mind?

Patañjali gives a beautiful answer:

> *Duḥkha daurmanasya aṅgamejayatva*
> *śvāsapraśvāsāḥ vikṣepa sahabhuvaḥ* (1.31).

When there is sorrow, grief, despondency in your mind, know that the mind is distracted, what you call *depression*. The yogi doesn`t run after sorrow or grief; it's absurd. He recognizes sorrow or grief or pain as a distinct sign that the mind is distracted.

When do I sink into despair and depression, when do I experience sorrow? When I want something which I cannot have, when I want to do something which I cannot do and when I am made to do something which I do not want to do. Then there is depression, naturally, sorrow, grief: I want to do something which I'm prevented from doing, I am made to do something I don't want to do. The mind runs in one direction and is pulled into another direction. You may or may not believe this: this is

happening to us all the time to a lesser or greater extent. I'm sure you noticed it. When you sit for your meditation half an hour, it's already true.

So, sorrow or grief or despair, depression are indications of the distractedness of the mind. *Duḥkha* is listed first as *vikṣepa sahabhuvaḥ*: you can recognize that there is an inner conflict, the mind is in sorrow, depressed.

Daurmanasya: usually this is translated as a mind that is full of evil thoughts: the whole mental substance has become vicious, evil.

Aṅgamejayat: the body is restless; when the mind is restless, the body is restless also. When you find that you are unable to sit still for some time, you can recognize that the mind is also not still.

One of the methods especially for the *haṭha* yogi is to train the body to sit still for longer and longer periods and the mind will eventually also fall in line. Make yourself sit half an hour and increase it towards three hours. Once the mind realizes that you are invincible, that there's no use fighting with you, it will collapse and come under your control.

And lastly: *śvāsapraśvāsāḥ vikṣepa sahabhuvaḥ*. Breathing, inhalation and exhalation are also *vikṣepa sahabhuvaḥ*. Why must I breathe in and breathe out at all? If this Good Lord is omniscient and so clever as to have been able to create such a lovely world and a beautiful human body, why did he institute the cumbersome procedure of inhalation and exhalation?

The ears, for instance, are kept open, they don't bother you. But why this inhalation, exhalation at all? The nostrils could have been kept open like the ears, and the air could have circulated without any problems. If God had wanted to make sure that the lungs are ventilated properly, he could have invented some kind of cross-circulation, with two noses. You think it is awkward for a little while, and then you get reconciled. It's an easy thing.

Patañjali says this breathing, inhalation, exhalation, was not meant merely for the ventilation of the lungs or the oxygenation of blood, but it is intended as an indicator of the state of your mind. Inhalation and exhalation have no respiratory significance at all. They exist because the mind is distracted, the mind is agitated. The nature of the breath is indication of the nature of the mind. If the mind is agitated, your breathing is agitated. Watch the breath and you know what the mind is like.

Tat pratiṣedhārtham eka tattva abhyāsaḥ (1.32).

All these distractions can be overcome if there is *eka tattva abhyāsaḥ*. I will give you the translation and then you can write your own commentary on it, because this can be interpreted for at least 100 years.

Tat: the distraction, *pratiṣedhārtham: to remove*, *eka: one*, *tattva: truth*, *abhyāsaḥ: practice*. Interpret it any way you like. A total dedication, an absolutely whole-souled dedication to the truth, to the reality, whatever be the method or object – this could be one interpretation. Another interpretation is: you must be devoted to one method. One method, one guru! The other could be: any number of methods, any number of gurus, any number of teachers, but one truth. Whatever your attitude towards it, there

should be a persistent, persevering quest of what is truth, a total sincerity. Am I sincere, am I serious? If I am, then I'll find it.

That itself is *alabdha bhūmikatva*: being firmly established somewhere. Because in the next few *sūtra*s, Patañjali indicates a few alternative methods. *Īśvara praṇidhānā* was suggested, total surrender to God, or investigation, *vicāra*. If you do not want to do that:

pracchardana vidhāraṇābhyāṁ vā prāṇasya (1.34).

Exhale, and hold it. It is not even *exhale*: *pracchardana* is almost vomiting. Vomit out the breath and hold it. When your will is going to burst, you will attain self-realization.

Viśokā vā jyotiṣmatī (1.36).

You have a beautiful vision of something glorious, divine, something that is free from grief, something that is free from sorrow, but you don`t cling to it as an image. You start off, using that as an image, but see through it, see what that image is! The image is in me. What is me? What is in me and what is me? I have to come back to that.

Viṣayavatī vā pravṛttir utpannā manasaḥ sthiti nibandhanī (1.35).

Viṣayavatī vā pravṛttir utpannā: when you are indulging in enjoyment of the objects of pleasure, some experience, something happens in you. Examine that. That's also another method. It almost suggests senselessness. Get hold of the senses: taste, sense of hearing, sense of sight, anything you like, and get through; don't stop there, go through that.

And another *sūtra* suggests:

Vītarāga viṣayam vā cittam (1.37).

You can also focus all your attention upon an object that is totally free from coloring, *rāga*, which could be extended to mean either a holy man who is free from mental conditioning, or a statue or an image of God! The statue also is free from any *rāga*; it doesn't say: „I like you", it doesn't say: „I don't like you". It's free. By focusing all my attention upon that, I can get to the same point. That *sūtra* may also mean: can you die within yourself and see in your own mind at what level the conflict in the currents of likes and dislikes cease? Get hold of that.

Svapna nidrā jñānālambanaṃ vā (1.38).

The trouble with a *sūtra* is that it's not a properly formed sentence. *Svapna* is dream, *nidrā* is sleep, *jñāna* is wisdom, *ālambanaṃ* is *to hold*, *vā* is *or.* How do you translate this, how do you form a sentence out of it?

It's possible to say that if you get an inspiration or a revelation during your sleep or your dream, get hold of that, you can meditate upon that. This can be one interpretation. Another interpretation can be: contemplate what's happening to you in your sleep and in your dream – the method of dream, the

method of sleep itself. The method of dream may be that, just as during the dream, the dream objects appear to be real, during the waking state, they all appear to be real – they are not! The method of sleep could be that in a homogenous state of mind, there is great peace, joy and happiness, and even so, it is possible to overcome this perception of diversity and get to that homogenous state of mind even in the waking state. All these are possible and perhaps all these are meant!

All these different methods are all valid, but make one your foothold, root there, and that prevents the mind from playing, from *vṛtti*. One method is not necessarily inferior or superior to the other in the list that Patañjali has given. Some look extraordinarily yogic and some look extraordinarily un-yogic. Some look very stern and very severe, and some others are ridiculous.

It depends on your predisposition, your tendency, but if you get hold of one of these things and strike root there, the obvious inference is: through any of these methods you can still reach the same point. The meditator being you and all these experiences being yours springing out of that, springing out of that, of that intelligence, of you, it is possible to attain self-knowledge, whatever be the path chosen.

What was described as *īśvara praṇidhāna* is also included in another discipline, called *kriya* yoga in *rāja* yoga. What is *kriyā* yoga? *Kriyā* means *action*, so *kriyā* yoga means *yoga of action*, which sounds like *karma* yoga. And that *karma* yoga bit includes *īśvara praṇidhāna*, which looks like *bhakti* yoga. So, I hope we will somewhere abandon the idea of dividing this yoga into bits and pieces, departments and compartments.

One of the vital parts of *rāja* yoga is *kriyā* yoga. And one of the vital practices of this *kriyā* yoga is *īśvara praṇidhāna* which is *bhakti*, devotion. All the three we discussed before:

> *tapas svādhyāya īśvara praṇidhāna kriyā-yoga* (YS 2.1).

Tapas has been translated into *austerity, penance, self-mortification* – a terrible word: *self-mortification*. You're not poking yourself with any pins and needles, chopping yourself off limb by limb – all these are considered to be self-mortifications. Why must I indulge in this? They have a very valid reason for it: you are attached to this body, you identify yourself – the self – with the body, which is not true, and in order to extricate your understanding from this body-consciousness cut yourself, and then look at this finger and say: „I'm not this finger, I'm not that finger that is cut. The pain doesn't happen to me, it is a sensation which courses through the body." If you wish to do that, it's nice.

Kṛṣṇa redefines *tapas* in quite a different way. There is a little bit of delightful confusion there in Kṛṣṇa's definition in the *Gītā*:

> *deva dvija guru prājña pūjanaṁ śaucam ārjavam*
> *brahmacaryam ahiṁsā ca śārīraṁ tapa ucyate* (17.14).

This *tapas* is again – not divided, but interpreted in a threefold way: physical, verbal and mental. Worship, adoration, is physical, physical *tapas*. *Pūjaram*, *śaucam – cleanliness* is physical *tapas*; *ārjavam*, *straightforwardness*, non-hypocrisy; *brahmacarya*, which may be *continence*, which may be whole-souled, total dedication to the ideal; *ahiṁsā*, *non-injury*, is also called *physical tapas*, though one may well argue this one.

> *Anudvega karaṁ vākyaṁ satyaṁ priya hitaṁ ca yat*
> *svādhyāyābhyasanaṁ caiva vāṅmayaṁ tapa ucyate* (17.15).

Anudvega karaṁ: you should speak in such a way that it does not disturb the minds of others. And then your speech should also be characterized by these three qualifications: it must be truthful, factual; though factual it shouldn't offend anybody. Though factual and non-offending, it should at the same time be beneficial to the others. If you put these three together, you find that you probably cannot speak. And non-speaking also may offend others!

> *Manaḥ prasādaḥ saumyatvaṁ maunam ātma vinigrahaḥ*
> *bhava sanśuddhir ity etat tapo mānasam ucyate* (17.16).

What is mental *tapas*? *Manaḥ prasādaḥ*: your mind is constantly in a state of joy, internal joy. *Saumyatvaṁ*: you're naturally good, the mind is naturally good. *Maunam* is the vow of silence. It is taken out of the verbal part of discipline and brought onto the mental part. *Mauna* is not merely keeping your mouth shut, but keeping your mind shut.

These are more difficult than poking your cheeks with spikes and chopping your fingers off. All these – what appears to be mental discipline, appears as physical discipline, what appears to be verbal discipline or speech – are elevated to mental discipline, so that here, one treads softly, softly, softly. If I can tread the whole life so softly, then perhaps one may say that I'm practicing *tapas*.

It involves perpetual vigilance, eternal vigilance, which is why we don't like it, and therefore we look for commandments. If someone tells us that chopping the fingers off is *tapas*, I accept: „Yes, that seems to be very real because it's painful, and if I'm able to endure that pain, I have dissociated myself from body-consciousness". Then a nurse comes and says: „Oh, that's alright, Swami, I can help you, just to ease the pain" and gives a morphine injection – I lost my finger and I lost the pain also. That's what we do all the time, so that these things do not seem to help really in the long run and on the spiritual plane. All these are spectacular, eye-catching – they catch only the eye, not my heart. It's eye-catching when somebody does something so fantastic, hangs himself by his teeth to a tree; it looks marvelous, most beautiful, you take some pictures!

Why do people take pictures? Because the objects that are illustrated are eye-catching things; they do not catch your mind, they do not catch your heart at all. If you see something which is truly religious, spiritual, it hits you and it's there, in you; you become the image of that which you saw and which inspired you. You don't need any pictures at all, you can never forget it. If you have lived with Swami Sivananda for even one year, you will never forget that. Not a single experience you will forget, they are all indelibly mirrored in you – not pictured in you, mirrored in you. You don't need anything. But how a man hangs himself by the skin or his teeth, that sort of thing, you must take a picture to remember, otherwise it's gone.

Tapas literally means *a burning light*. It is burning, but it is light. It is not a destructive burning, it is an enlightening burning. It should burn, it does burn. Light burns all the darkness away, light burns all the shadows away, that's all. That light that burns the shadows away, the darkness away, is called *tapas*.

Svādhyāya, as I mentioned earlier, may mean *study* as also *japa*, and also *constant inquiry into one's own nature*. *Svādhyāya*: *sva – oneself*, *dhyāya – dhyāna* or *study*. It may be interpreted to mean both: self-study, studying oneself or studying by oneself. *Tapas, īśvara praṇidhāna, svādhyāya* – these three are considered *kriyā yoga*.

Why must I indulge in all these?

> *Samādhi bhāvanārthaḥ kleśa tanūkaraṇārthaś ca* (*YS* 2.2).

When I practice this *kriyā* yoga, contemplation becomes easy. It facilitates meditation.

If I hurt myself, if I injure my body, is that going to facilitate meditation? It may or may not. If I have a toothache, it is possible that I find the source where the pain is experienced, which is the self, me. But if I'm not in that advanced state of consciousness, it may keep me completely tied, and I'm not able to proceed one inch further. I sit down for my meditation: „What is pain?" Something says: „This is pain! Can't you see? What a silly question!" Then the mind is completely caught up in that trap and it doesn't want to go anywhere else. If, on the other hand, *tapas* means an inner, psychic fire which burns away the darkness of ignorance, then that fire definitely aids meditation, so that it's not a crude physical practice, but it is a spiritual adventure, an enlightening fire.

It also wears down *kleśa,* psychic distress, it wears down sorrow. The yogi does not look for pain, he does not impose pain upon himself. There's plenty of sorrow, plenty of trouble in this world without you inviting some more. Whatever may be our station in life, we are all subjected to ever so many situations in which there is sorrow, there is pain; we don't have to go inviting it. It's better to keep oneself awake and alert, so that when painful situations come along, I am able to deal with them, I am able to see them. Once I have experienced this, if I have understood the nature of sorrow, I've understood from where it springs, I've understood what it is made of, then Patañjali warns: don't go inviting these things again.

Heyaṃ duḥkham anāgatam (2.16).

The sorrow that has not befallen you yet, avoid it. Avoid by all means entering into situations where you suffer. It's a marvelous doctrine! I wish more attention was paid to that one *sūtra*.

Kleśa tanūkaraṇārthaś ca: all the time we are trying to wear this sorrow out, reduce it, make it thinner, make it more transparent, reduce it, decrease it, not increase it. *Kleśa*s are aspects of psychic distress, that's all that one can say; some internal, psychological disturbance. The next *sūtra* explains:

avidyā asmitā rāga dveṣa abhiniveśaḥ kleśāḥ (2.3).

These five are *kleśa*s. We continue to use the Sanskrit word because I don't think it is translatable. Vaguely, it means the *sources of distress*, *sources of grief*, *sources of sorrow*. And these five are the sources of sorrow, sources of grief, sources of pain.

Avidyā: *ignorance*. *Asmitā* – it's not exactly *ego-sense*, but *I-am ness*. This is not there in small children. A boy may think he's a girl and a girl think she's a boy, there doesn't seem to be such hard and crystallized ego-consciousness, *I am*-consciousness. It's all fluid.

The whole universe is one, and in that totality a wave arises, a ripple arises. *Arises* is a funny word; all this happens within it, just as in a mirror a mountain is reflected: it looks as though in that reflection itself there is a depth and there is a height, there is a black and there is a white. These are not true, these are not real, these are reflection. In this cosmic consciousness, there are infinite numbers of ripples, infinite numbers of waves. As one of these manifests, it seems to take on a certain shape and a form – seems to, like the tornado or a whirlpool. As it spirals up – once again we are back to the spirals – vaguely you can say that this is an individuality.

The tornado is non-different from what is around it, the whirlpool is non-different from water, it is the water that churns around; it is the air that forms a tornado. The tornado does not contain an element other than its surrounding. That whirlpool has nothing whatsoever extraneous to the lake. And yet, the movement of energy in that tornado or in that whirlpool seems to create a certain low-density energy around itself. That's why it seems to have an individuality of its own. Whereas there is motion here, there is non-motion there. And between the motion and the non-motion there is a small area of low-density, a separation, a division.

This division is not a total division; there is no complete and absolute vacuum in the universe. When this high-density-area called *I am*-ness is being built up, just around the tornado or the whirlpool, there is a low-density-energy area. That is what they call *avidyā*. *Avidyā* or ignorance and the *I am*-ness arise together, one cannot exist without the other.

The baby looks round, perhaps wonders: „What am I now?". The baby, the child, is still looking for its own identity. Neither the mother knows what the identity is, nor is there anybody who can really enlighten the baby in regard to its own identity, and in the absence of that, the identification gets formed. That is where the *I am* comes into being. When this *I am* comes into being, around this, there is this ignorance. I don't know what this is, and therefore *I am*. It's a very strange phenomenon, and therefore it is called *māyā*: you do not know what you are, and therefore you think you are.

Because the reality being cosmic, there is no *I am* in it at all, except on a cosmic level. Therefore, these two arise together, a low-density and an *I am*, or an *I am* and a low-density, you can never really pinpoint which was first, like the hen or the egg. Does the whirlpool rise because of some disturbance in the neighborhood or does the tornado rise and cause this disturbance? Which is the cause, which is the effect, I don't think that anybody can really understand.

The same thing in regard to our waking in the morning: does sleep come to an end and I wake up or do I wake up and sleep comes to an end? It's a silly question. Both happen simultaneously, that's all. But our mind having been trained in logic, in a sequence of cause and effect, seeks an answer to this: „Which is first?" Either of these must have been first. *Avidyā* and *asmitā* happen together. The world outside is experienced by this *I am* only through this ignorance. I don't know who you are, yet I enter into relationship with you. I try to see you. I try to understand you. You are around me, so I have a feeling that I must know you. And that knowledge perforce must be colored by this ignorance.

I am, I see you are, but I don't know who you are because I don't even know who I am. And yet, to live in the same world, it seems to be necessary that I should understand you, and the understanding is possible only through this ignorance. I'm surrounded by this curtain of ignorance.

It's a very interesting phenomenon: this whirlpool called *I am*, surrounded by ignorance, gives rise to quite a number of other whirlpools. I communicate with you through this curtain of ignorance and the energy that passes through this. The *I am* interprets every passing wind as a pleasant or an unpleasant experience. When an experience that is interpreted as pleasant arrives, the same *I am* looks: „From where did it come?", not realizing that the division has taken place within me, the definition was given

within me. Not realizing that, seeing that the experience comes from outside, the *I am* looks outside: „Where did this come from? Ah, hey! Ah, nice guy, I like him." So simple as this! And the third *kleśa* arises. We have had two: *avidyā – ignorance*, *asmitā – I am*-ness, the third arises: *rāga*. *Rāga* is *coloring* as also *infatuation, liking*.

Sukha anuśayī rāgaḥ (2.7).

A feeling of liking, attraction, follows and accompanies the experience of pleasure. It's totally irrational. I had a momentary experience of pleasure. How did this experience of pleasure arise? Because something happened in my life and I interpreted that as pleasure and then went about looking for the source, not realizing that I am the source all the time. I interpreted it as pleasure, but I thought the source was outside, because the experience, I thought, also came from outside. The source of that pleasure is considered my friend. I'm attracted to that person or experience or object, to the source of that pleasurable experience.

Then, to my surprise, the vicious circle forms: whatever that person says or does, whatever comes from that source, I interpret as pleasure. How else do I know what pleasure is? He's my friend and whatever he does must be good to me. How do I know that he's my friend? Oh, he has been good to me! How do I know that what he does is good? Because he's my friend! Round and round and round, that's what is called *whirlpool*. We're caught in hundreds of these little whirlpools. This will go on till I look within and see: I'm the one that decided it in the first place.

When this happened in the first instance, I considered this to be pleasure and got attached to what was considered the source of this pleasure. The source of that pleasure is still within; I was the one who interpreted it first as experience and then as pleasure. I did it! It was not outside at all. Till that is traced back to the me, this whirlpool goes on and on, and also the other whirlpool, which is similar:

duḥkha anuśayī dveṣa (2.8).

The rejection follows painful experiences. That sounds simple. It is not.

Why does it become painful at all? Because you are rejecting it! It becomes painful because you reject, and you reject because it is painful. Which is first, hen or egg? If I'm dying of cancer and a doctor says: „Swami, here is an injection. It may be a bit painful, but it will surely cure you of your cancer", I would love it, it's not painful at all, it's delightful. So, I consider it painful, reject it and make it painful, run away from it and thereby make it more painful. If one sees that, everything is painful! Whatever one does is painful.

Sukha anuśayī rāgaḥ, duḥkha anuśayī dveṣa: I classify, I divide all experiences into pain and pleasure, or indifferent, and my own reaction to all those experiences is attraction and repulsion. I'm caught up in these whirlpools.

Only the fifth *kleśa* Patañjali is unable to explain, he says. It's one of these wonderful things in Oriental mysticism where they can boldly say: „Sorry, I don't know". We are not omniscient.

Sva rasa vāhī viduṣopi tathārūḍho abhiniveśaḥ (2.9).

Pain and pleasure, sleep and eating and sickness, coming together and parting – the whole life seems to be full of unhappiness. Patañjali himself says that if you really examine, everything in life is miserable. Socrates seems to have said: „The unexamined life is not worth living", and I had one corollary to it: if you examined life, it's not worth living either! And yet, why is it that I want to live?

We can discuss and come to the definite conclusion of unanimous voting that life is not worth living. But if someone comes along and says: „I have a gun!", we would all escape through this door. Why is that? Patañjali says: „I don't know". It's a fantastic *sūtra*. *Sva rasa vāhī viduṣopi*: even in very intelligent and awakened people, scholars, even in men of wisdom this is found, the blind clinging to life. Why is this? He says: „I don't know". It seems to flourish on its own steam, it seems to be self-perpetuating. I see life is miserable, never mind, I still want to live. That is called *abhiniveśa*. Blind clinging to life is illogical, and sooner or later we realize that life is not logical at all, it is psychological and biological. There's nothing more of logic in life.

Any theory that one may have of life and its meaning must inevitably come to this ignorance, the cordon of ignorance that surrounds me, and I must come to that place where I say: „I don't know." If you have a sense of humor, you really say that you don't know, and yet you are. You know you are, and yet you don't know who you are – you understand the problem? Then you freeze. At that moment, two things happen at the same time. That which you took for granted as a solid reality turns out not so solid. My God, I was dead certain I am. But I don't know who I am!

How can these two be reconciled? You know the famous story, one of the first Zen stories. There was a great, holy mystic called Bodhidharma who went to China. A disciple approached him, waited outside, and then the old man opened the door and barked: „What do you want?" The disciple said: „Destroy my mind."

The teacher said: „Give it to me, I'll destroy it."

„I cannot find it." „I've destroyed it."

It is as simple as that. When you confront yourself that way, that which you took for granted as solid reality becomes not so solid. When that solid notion concerning yourself becomes not so solid, the ignorance moat-trench that you have dug around that *I am* gets filled. So simple as that!

I had taken for granted that I is the solid reality, and when this I was taken to be a solid reality, there was high-density energy here, and therefore low-density around. When I question this *I am*: „What is *I am*?", I don't know. I don't know, and yet I am, and yet I think I am, I assumed this I am. It seemed to be such a solid reality. How do I know that I am? If I don't know who I am, how do I know I am at all? When you corner that, when this melts, that trench of ignorance around gets filled. And this and that become one.

10 That Is Freedom

Out of all the discussions that we so far had, I think a slight insight into what the yogis call *truth* and *falsehood* emerges. Cosmic, indivisible intelligence is true. It is cosmic, indivisible, and it is consciousness, intelligence. The lake is true, with all its ripples, with all its currents, with all its waves, and yet without these distinctions. The wave doesn't come and say: „I am a wave“; the ripple doesn't come and say: „I am a ripple“.

It's only because we are outside it that we name them, we distinguish them one from the other. The totality is truth. That does not mean that the totality has to be free of the waves and the ripples, it does not mean that we have to cease to exist, commit suicide before self-knowledge can be attained. Deep within this ripple, there is the same lake. Why do I say *within the ripple*? Because something else has been said.

When they said that the self is in the heart, they didn't mean the heart that is flesh. In the definition given by the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, the heart is the consciousness in that body. There is nothing but consciousness in the body! You see it as gross flesh only because you are seeing with fleshy eyes. The mind that is thought can see it as only a thought. Eyes are flesh, so you see this as flesh. The mind is thought, and it sees it as a concept, as a notion, as a personality. On the plane of consciousness, consciousness becomes conscious of consciousness. Aha! It is not *I see*-consciousness. When the mind sees this, the mind sees all these as different concepts, again. That is what the mind is tuned to.

All these are all the time true, but the truth is not conceptual, and not divisible; all these are true on their own planes, and all these exist without any division whatsoever. Lake is true, waves are true, ripples are true, but that the ripples or the waves are independently true is false.

Perhaps you are wondering: Why do we then say it’s false? Nothing seems to be false. That is it! Nothing is false, false is nothing. Because what is false cannot exist. Kṛṣṇa said it in a very beautiful couplet in the *Gītā* in the second chapter (2.16): „The unreal cannot be, the real cannot cease to be.” It is just one couplet, and he dropped it in the *Gītā*, and kept quiet.

Even in our attempt to get rid of the false we are making the false appear to be real. The attention is to what is true, what is real. In the same way we saw that the sensation of pleasure creates attachment in the mind and becomes attachment at the other side.

There is this intelligence everywhere, in every cell of this body. „That feels nice!” What says that? The intelligence in the fingertips. And the intelligence in the fingertips which experiences this pleasure, seeks that pleasure, goes round. It approves that as pleasure, seeks that pleasure, experiences that pleasure, approves that pleasure, seeks it, goes on. What has I got to do with this?

In the same way, the feeling of pain is rejected, and the rejection becomes painful; pain-rejection becomes another cycle. Just one step more and you see it immediately: you are expecting something to happen, and it does not happen. You are frustrated, they say. Is that right? I don’t know if that is right: if I *am* frustrated, that frustration should not leave me at all! I *am* a human being; I won’t change into a

dog next year. If I say: „I am frustrated", I'm stuck with the frustration forever! That's not true. Why? Because it was the expectation that got frustrated. Expectation is followed by frustration. Frustration leads to expectation. That goes on and on and on. That's the whirlpool again.

But here, Patañjali asks us: „What have you got to do with this?" What has I got to do with this? Expectation becomes frustration. Hope leads to disappointment. Pursuit of pleasure leads to pain, or craving. The craving is sooner or later realized to be pain. In all this drama, what has you got to do with it? This is the inquiry we discussed, that is called *abhyāsa*. Only if this is clearly realized, the *abhyāsa* that is of eight limbs becomes also clear. Those eight limbs are merely an elaboration of the basis of the philosophy!

Yama niyama āsana prāṇāyāma pratyāhāra dhāraṇā dhyāna samādhi (*YS* 2.29).

Yogāṣṭāvaṅgāni: these are the eight *limbs of yoga*, not *eight steps*, though some of the masters have considered them steps. A little baby has all limbs in them already! That baby is not going to develop something other than it has now. Therefore, one who practices yoga, one who understands the philosophy of yoga, as he steps onto the path, he's fully there. All of the eight limbs are to be practiced at every moment, not one after the other.

Yama means *restraint,* a determinedness: thus far and no further. Yama is also the name of the deity presiding over death. Someone who says: „Enough!", that is. It is important to remember that *yama* is determination.

Patañjali gives us a list of *yama*s. I've often said that it is a description and not at all a commandment. Even when Patañjali suggests that these are *sārvabhaumā mahāvratam* (2.31), *universal in their application*, there is no suggestion there that *you shalt*. If you are truly and sincerely, seriously practicing yoga, these will be found in you, and these are not amendable. If they are not found in you, never despair. As you go on practicing yoga, they will come. When perfection is reached, all these qualities are found in the yogi. The baby is there, with small, tiny limbs, and as that baby grows to perfect manhood, all these limbs also reach their own perfection at that point. These qualities are not commandments, but descriptions of what are found in yogis.

Ahiṁsā satya asteya brahmacarya aparigrahāḥ yamāḥ (2.30).

Ahiṁsā is non-violence, and most commentators, including our master Swami Sivananda, emphasized that it is love. It's not merely non-violence or non-aggressiveness, but it is love. It is not the type that we practice: „I love you, you love me", it is love in which the least trace of violence is absent. So, you take care of aggression, you take care of violence in all its aspects.

See that you cannot bring, or you need not bring, love into being, it is there already. When you do not see the sun, it does not mean the sun has somehow disappeared and you have to bring it into being. There is a cloud; when that cloud has been blown away you see: the sun has always been shining there. Love is always there in the heart.

The ultimate reality being oneness, the manifestation of that oneness is love. Love is merely the manifestation of the oneness that is already there. That is somehow veiled by the spirit of domination, aggression, violence. Blow that out. You will see that love is there, has always been there. That is *ahiṁsā*. And therefore, the description has been given in negative terms: *a-hiṁsā*, *non-violence*, where in the *Bhakti Yoga Sūtras* love was described rather positively:

sa tv asmin parama prema rūpā (2):

The author has qualified it by saying, this is *supreme* love*. Bhakti* is not sensuous love, it is supreme. The word *supreme* already creates a negativeness: not this, not this, not this, not this, *supreme*. To emphasize that factor, Nārada went on to describe that this is *mūkāsvādanavat* (52) or *the indescribable*,

anirvacanīyaṃ premasvarūpam (51):

It is not possible to describe it at all. Instead of going to all that length, Patañjali adopts a very simple method and describes it negatively already: *ahiṁsā*.

Satyam does not mean *truthfulness*, *satya* means *truth*. Non-violence as a discipline I guess some people know. What is truth as a discipline? Saying what is true? Do I know what is true? There's a lovely passage in the *Bible*. Somebody asked Jesus: „What is truth?" (*John* 18:38). And he kept quiet and walked away. What is truth? Can your mind grasp this truth and describe it? What is described is a description of the truth – can you ever describe anything truthfully?

Do I know how to sift truth from opinion? Is it possible at all to sift the wheat from the chaff? If you do that, then you'll probably come back to this magnificent truth that there is only one, the rest being opinion, the rest being appearance, appearance being what appears to my eyes, what appears to my mind, to thought. Truth really means that, not merely speaking the truth, but the continuous, persistent quest of what is, not trying to weave your own opinions into what is called *truth* and calling it *truth*. It's a ridiculous thing.

Now you see that *ahiṁsā*, non-violence or love, and truth, are closely interconnected. The moment the heart sees the truth, realizes the truth of oneness, there is love. Obviously: you don't have to struggle.

The next is called *brahmacarya*. *Brahmacarya* literally means *to live, move and have one's being in that truth, Brahman*, in the cosmic unity, cosmic being. Can the mind, can the heart constantly move in that being, live in that being? Then naturally, *ahiṁsā* is inevitable and *satyam* is inevitable.

Asteya and *aparigraha*, *non-stealing* and *non-greediness*, seem to be nearly an anticlimax in this context, unless we realize that they probably had a different connotation. Why do I steal at all, why do I covet somebody else's property? It is when there is a sense of division.

So here, there is an indication of positive oneness and there are indicators of selfishness. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, if you enjoy without sharing with others what nature gives you plenty and freely, you're a thief:

Tair dattān apradāyaibhyo yo bhuṅkte stena eva saḥ (3.12).

In that way, most people in the world are thieves. Once the cosmic oneness is realized, then there is no need to hold, there is no anxiety. The same thing reoccurs in the last *yama*, which is called *aparigraha*. *Aparigraha* means *non-acceptance of what one does not need*.

Then there are the five *niyama*s. *Niyama*s are more observances, day-to-day guidelines for living:

Śauca saṃtoṣa tapas svādhyāya īśvara praṇidhāna (*YS* 2.32).

Śauca is *cleanliness*, *purity*, cleanliness of dress, purity of body, purity of surroundings. If these things are there, then you may reasonably expect the mind also to be clean. I do not see the mind very easily, and how am I going to be worried about its uncleanliness when I'm not even keen on keeping that clean which I can see clearly?

Saṃtoṣa is *contentment*. Contentment is easy to understand if you know that in French *content* means *happy*: to be *content* is to be happy always. To be discontented is to invite problems. Discontentment suffers a problem. It is the discontentment that suffers, not me! But if I get hooked onto that, I also go round.

Tapas svādhyāya īśvara praṇidhāna (*YS* 2.32) we have discussed earlier. *Tapas* is *austerity*, *svādhyāya* is *study, īśvara praṇidhāna* is *devotion to God*. These occur in the *Yoga Sūtras* in quite a number of contexts and are considered independent *kriyā* yoga in themselves. These are also part of *niyama*, and *īśvara praṇidhāna* is exalted as an independent approach to the practice of yoga.

You can wipe off all the rest of it, and if you merely surrender yourself to God, you're also a *rāja* yogi. You arrive at the same goal of self-realization, persistent to say: whatever happens is the divine will, whatever happens is God's grace, go on like this, day in and day out, without changing. That itself is a total *rāja* yoga discipline.

These five are *niyama* that promote the well-order of life. That is another meaning of the word *niyama*: *a well-ordered life*, discipline, a life of moderation.

The third limb in yoga is *āsana*. Not quite the *āsana*s that we practice, but any posture which measures up to a two-word definition:

sthira sukham āsanam (2.46).

It must be firm, and it must be pleasant, *sukham*. It must be firm enough to enable you to sit for a long time, and it must be pleasant enough to enable you to sit for a long time without finding an excuse to move your body. If you remember: how do I know that the mind is distracted? *Aṅgamejayatva* (1.31): when you go on shaking your body, that means your mind is also shaking. Your mind is not steady and therefore the body is not steady. The mind finds an excuse to shake the body, move the body, disturb the body. Therefore, I can read in that nervousness, physical agitation the symptom of an agitated mind.

So, one must go a little deeper into it. Swami Satchidananda also has pointed out very beautifully that if by persistent practice you learn to sit more and more and longer and longer and longer, even, to some extent, resisting the impulse to move the body, you will discover: the mind will become steady. This is one method.

> *Sthira sukham āsanam,*
> *tato dvandvānabhighātaḥ* (2.46, 48).

If you go on sitting for a considerable time like this, and when you get what Swami Satchidananda called *āsana jaya*, if you can sit in that posture for at least three hours without feeling uncomfortable, discomfort, then you overcome the pull of attraction and repulsion. *Dvandvānabhighātaḥ* – you are able to transcend the opposites: pleasure and pain, happiness, unhappiness.

When this physical ability has been acquired, then you pay attention to breathing. Patañjali's description of the breathing exercise is fairly brief and simple: merely regulation of the inhalation, exhalation and retention. He doesn't give a detailed technique. One *prāṇāyāma* is mentioned specifically: when the mind is intensely focused upon something, then the breath is involuntary and naturally suspended.

> *Bāhyābhyantara viṣayākṣepī caturthaḥ* (2.51):

The breath is suddenly suspended, when either you are concentrated on something within yourself or outside. This is a concomitant of concentration. When you're deeply concentrated, the whole mind`s mental energy is flowing in one direction. You're listening to your own breathing or you're listening to your mantra. Then the mind becomes sensitive: it is not distracted, and it does not want any distraction.

At one point, the mind becomes so sensitive that even the movement and the slight sound of your own breathing is resented. Then the breath is automatically suspended. When the breath is suspended, there is no agitation in the mind also; the mind is absolutely still, it is aware within itself.

The next is known as *pratyāhāra*. Interestingly, Patañjali, when he has finished with the description of *prāṇāyāma,* says:

> *tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśāvaraṇam*
> *dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manasaḥ* (2.52-53).

What happens if I go on practicing *prāṇāyāma*? *Tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśāvaraṇam*: then the veil that covered the inner light is removed. *Dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manasaḥ*: and the mind becomes capable of total concentration.

What happened to the next step, to *pratyāhāra*? *Pratyāhāra* is taken for granted! *Pratyāhāra* or *withdrawal* or introversion of the senses, total attention upon the mind, yourself, happens as you go on practicing *prāṇāyāma*. They're not two distinct phenomena; one is opening to the other. While practicing *prāṇāyāma*, it's good constantly listen to this breathing itself and not allow the mind to wander around. In other words: never do *prāṇāyāma* as a mechanical process. If it is done that way,

then the *prāṇāyāma* itself gathers the rays of the mind and focuses them upon yourself. That goes hand in hand. *Pratyāhāra* literally means *to gather into oneself*.

The last three are *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. *Dhāraṇā* is *concentration*, concentration in the sense of directing the flow of mental energies in one beam:

deśa bandhaścittasya dhāraṇā (3.1).

The attention is given a restricted space to flow towards. *Deśa* is *space*, *bandha* is *to restrict*, *citta* is *the attention of the mind*. When this is done, then there is *dhāraṇā*. It is not deafening the mind, it is not emptying the mind, it is focusing all one's attention upon a small field of the mind, a single thought, a single concept or whatever is chosen for this exercise.

Can the mind merely flow towards that one point, not to be fixed there, but flow towards it? Since meditation is an inward process, whatever is happening inside you are watching and the attention is flowing gently towards it, without straying here and there, straight towards itself.

Tatra pratyayaika tānatā dhyānam (3.2).

When that which you are contemplating, meditating upon, when that is the sole thought that occupies the entire, total mind, that is *dhyānam*. It is not as much emptying the mind as making it one, entering into that.

First you look at that single thought or concept, and then it is as if you enter into that concept. Call it *God*, call it *love*, call it this, call it that, call it *the mantra*, whatever it is – I am standing outside this concept, I'm standing outside this thought, I'm standing outside this notion. When I'm asking this question: „What is it and what is it made of?" I'm entering into it. I'm surrounded by it, inside, outside. I'm like a block of ice dropped into the lake. I'm water, above me is water, below is water, on all sides there is water, inside, outside, everywhere there is water.

There's just a hazy feeling that I am surrounded by me. I am surrounded by me. I being water, the block of ice, and around me also is water, I am surrounded by myself. And when that becomes intense, for a few moments you feel

svarūpa śūnyam iva (3.3),

that I has completely dissolved. The I has completely dissolved. That is described as *samādhi* by Patañjali, who also says:

tad dṛśeḥ kaivalyam (2.25).

It's a beautiful expression: when that point is reached, the seer is liberated, the seer is freed, the seer is emancipated. Who is the seer? We saw the seer is the sight, *draṣṭā dṛśi mātraḥ* (2.20). There is no I to see you; seeing takes place. When seeing takes place, somehow the I is produced, brought into being because of ignorance. And because the I thinks it sees, it has to create a you: I sees you, whereas the

truth is that seeing happens. The seeing itself becomes polarized by some mysterious process into I and you.

So, he said: *draṣṭā dṛśi mātraḥ*. Seeing alone happens, there is no seer apart from seeing. And here finally, when it comes to *samādhi*, he says: *tad dṛśeḥ kaivalyam*. The act of seeing is liberated from the polarization of I and you.

That is freedom. Freedom is not the freedom I have from you: „I am free from you" or „you are free from me". Freedom is when there is no bondage at all and *tad dṛśeḥ kaivalyam,* when the action takes place without a you and a me, when life goes on without a subject and an object, when all experiences take place without a division into I and you, when life goes on without any division in it and when the I and the ego-sense as the divider has been abandoned. The I may still be there, just as a ripple is there, just as a wave is there, but without a division. The wave does not create a division in itself. The wave does not say: „This is behind me, and this is in front of me". The wave is part of the lake. The wave is the lake. The wave is non-different from the lake. That is: the lake alone exists.

If there is a goal, that is the goal of yoga. That is *samādhi*, not in the sense of sitting in the corner of the room and saying: „I'm in *samādhi*", but even that need to isolate oneself is not there. Unfortunately, the word *kaivalyam*, which is the goal of yoga, is translated into *isolation*. It's not an isolation in the sense of cutting oneself off, it is an isolation in the sense that this seeing which had polarized itself into *I see you* has been isolated.

That act of seeing is liberated from the need to have a subject and an object. The eyes are open, they see. Neither I is necessary nor you is necessary. And therefore, there is no need to sit and meditate and there is no need not to meditate either. There is no need to eat, there is no need to avoid eating. There is no need to do anything, there is no sense in not doing anything.

That is total freedom. Thank you.

Audience: You didn't go into the powers.

They are mentioned. And after mentioning all these, Patañjali says that these are all distractions to be avoided.

> *Sthāny upanimantraṇe saṅga-smaya akaraṇaṁ*
> *punar aniṣṭa prasaṅgāt* (3.51).

Even if the Gods come and ask you to demonstrate these powers, he says: „Refuse". If you fall in temptation to that, once again you will be caught in the same trap. So, the description is only academic, he says.

Audience: What was Swami Sivananda's view of this?

It seems, when he was in the Himalaya, a kind of tantrik came to him and wanted to teach him some magic. According to this, you must apply some black stuff on your thumbnail and repeat some mantra.

You keep concentrating on this and after some time, you will see some deity there, a kind of spirit, Hanumān in this case.

You can ask that Hanumān any question, and Hanumān will answer. It seems this man was prepared to teach Swami Sivananda in this, and Swami Sivananda said: „Sorry. Hanumān is considered a deity people worship. You say I can make use of that Hanumān for my private ends, but God is not my servant".

Jñāna Yoga

1 The Qualifications of a Seeker

Yoga means the discovery of the non-existence of the divider. A division has been created in consciousness, in intelligence – that is what I think. I think there is a division between me and you, I think there is a division between experience and expression, within the me, and I think there is a division between me and the other – within myself, between us, and us and the material universe. I think there is a division. This division, having been taken for granted, continues to exist.

This is the famous theory of *māyā*. *Māyā* is considered to be *anadi santam*, it has no beginning. Illusion has no beginning because we are born in illusion. When you open your eyes, there is illusion. But it is not endless, it can be brought to an end. There is division and the divider. The divider is the ego. Does it exist or not exist at all? Unless I inquire into its nature, I cannot even know whether it exists or not. I've taken it for granted.

Yoga is the investigation into the nature of the me. When it is discovered that it does not exist, again, one does not proceed on the assumption that the ego does not exist. That is a great error that most advanced students of yoga have committed. All of us are advanced, aren't we? I've never really heard someone considering himself to be a beginner, except in the case of yoga *āsana*s, when we say: „No, I'm only a beginner. Don't twist me into those funny knots."

When it comes to meditation, when it comes to *samādhi*, we are not interested in the beginning: „Teach us something advanced!" By this, we mean that we do not want to undertake the investigation afresh, but we want to jump on the shoulders of a Buddha or a Christ or a Kṛṣṇa, one of the great Upanishadic sages; jump on their shoulders, and right on from there straight on to heaven. That is impossible.

I cannot assume that the ego does not exist, I must investigate it. That is what the word *discover* means. *Discover* means: I only see the cover, and I must have the courage to see the cover. I must have the patience and I must have the ability to see the cover. *Cover* in *jñāna* is called *āvaraṇa*, *veil*. I only see that; I only see the ego. Even that is probably doubtful. And I must investigate it and investigate it in all its aspects. That is what we have been doing.

Haṭha yoga starts with that. As I twist and turn the body in various postures, I'm beginning to see – it's not yet clear – that there is an intelligence independent of the me. And perhaps that me doesn't exist at all – perhaps! The body seems to have its own intelligence, and what superficially appeared to be purely physical is soon realized to be spiritual, something beyond the physical. When you try to do some yoga posture and the body refuses, it challenges your notion that the body is yours. It may not be! The body perhaps belongs to some intelligence of which you have no idea at all.

That intelligence is beyond the me. It knows how to take care of the body, it knows how to produce it as it knows to destroy it, if it wants to. In *haṭha* yoga, we just wake up to the existence of an intelligence that is beyond the me and that the me cannot divide.

In what's called *daily life*, we see the me jumping up again: selfishness, greed, I, you, *I want this*, *I will not give it to you* – that sort of thing. And I begin to wonder again. I see this selfishness causes a lot of unhappiness. What I vaguely saw in *haṭha* yoga becomes a little clearer now – it's the other side of it: that if I accepted the me as a factual reality, it brings with it untold unhappiness, unceasing unhappiness.

Prompted by this, when I begin to look at this selfishness, it seems to disappear. And when it disappears, there is great joy. That is what I call *God*, during that period, when I am in relationship with you, when I function in this world. I see these two: when the ego-sense-triggered activity prevails, I'm unhappy, and when the ego-sense-triggered activity seems to dissolve and there is something else, which is called *love*, then there is a peculiar joy and inexpressible delight, which I call *God*. Then I wonder: what is this God? Who created me, who created you, and what is it where all of us are suspended?

I'm devoted to that indivisible intelligence which I sense during what we called *karma* yoga. It doesn't matter what we call it. It is not just a progression, it is a combined effort at all levels: at the physical level, at the mental level, at the emotional level, and at the functional level. At the vital level, it's called *karma* yoga, at the physical level, it may be called *haṭha* yoga. I'm slowly waking up to it that that which is beyond the ego-sense is not only true, but in that is what I'm seeking: the happiness, the peace, and the joy, and the delight.

Both Ramana Maharshi and the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* have said something terribly interesting: the ego, if there is an ego, is all the time working for its own destruction, because it seeks perpetual, unending joy, unending happiness, which is available only on its destruction. The ego seeks unbroken peace which is available only on its own destruction.

I, that has momentarily experienced this delight in the knowledge of something beyond itself, calls it *God*, calls it Brahman or *ātmā*, or whatever words may be used. The ego itself is calling that, from which it derived that great joy *īśvara*, or *ātmā*, self, Brahman, and falls in love with it. Why? Because there's great joy in it, delight in it! And that may be regarded as *bhakti* yoga.

Having fallen in love with it, it becomes totally absorbed in it. When it does that, your attraction is in *rāja* yoga, meditation. As you get closer and closer to that, it becomes quite clear that if that is supreme peace and bliss, why not get lost in it? And there, you have *samādhi.*

Samādhi is when

tadeva artha mātra nirbhāsaṁ svarūpa śūnyam iva samādhiḥ (*YS* 3.3),

when that with which you have fallen in love, this self, this supreme cosmic intelligence alone is, alone is as if the meditator ceases to exist. Then it is *samādhi*.

The word *alone* is a translation of the word in the *Yoga Sūtras, kaivalya*. Unfortunately, that has been translated to mean *isolation*, and from there on, a misunderstanding has arisen that the yogi tears himself away from everything else, secludes himself, isolates himself. That doesn't seem to be the meaning at all. *Alone* means that that alone exists, the I does not exist.

That alone exists! That is more or less where we were in our *rāja* yoga session: that alone exists. But we still haven't decided what to do with this I, what to do with this ego. And in *jñāna* yoga, there is a direct investigation into the nature of the truth concerning this ego, concerning this I: what is this I, what is this ego? Does it exist or not exist? If it exists, what is it? How do I dispose of it? If I dispose of it, who is I who is disposing of it? Which one is the truth, the destroyer of the I or the destroyed I, the victor or the vanquished?

To be able to arrive at that, we are told that one must be qualified. I didn't go deeper into that earlier on, because in all branches of yoga, though the qualifications of a spiritual aspirant are insisted upon, nowhere else is it in greater evidence than in *jñāna* yoga.

Why is it so? Because in the case of *haṭha* yoga, the qualifications are obvious. If you cannot even raise your left leg, you'd better not go to the class. In the case of *karma* yoga, the qualifications immediately become evident. The moment you set out to say: „I'm going to do *karma* yoga now", within minutes you are exposed. In *bhakti* also: the lack of interest, lack of zeal, lack of faith and the lack of devotion, they are obviously detected very easily. In *rāja* yoga, which is after all an extension of *haṭha* yoga, or for which *haṭha* yoga is the preparation, you cannot meditate as the mind is wandering. It is difficult to restrain the mind, it is difficult to focus your attention; when you sit there for meditation, all that you get is sleep. So, again, the qualifications of a student become easy of detection, but in *jñāna*, it's difficult.

One may read a few books and pretend to be enlightened. It is possible for one with a rudimentary ill-digested knowledge of some text to talk big, very, very loud and glorious, and especially, I've discovered this when I first came to America, if you have the right type of public relations. Someone who has a rudimentary education, rudimentary understanding, rudimentary knowledge – which means: no knowledge – of some of these expressions, can pose for a sage. I hope I don't shock you: sometimes, I admire those people who are able to pull the wool over other people's eyes. They're clever!

If I'm able to make you all believe that I or someone else is God, I am cheating you. Whom can I cheat? Only a fool. If people are fools, why shouldn't these men cheat them? So, I may be in sympathy with those who take advantage of other people's foolishness. But in this special part of investigation, in *jñāna* yoga, in the path of enlightenment or knowledge, yoga, the danger is when the teacher bluffs himself, and that happens very often, unfortunately.

It is not that he is deceiving others, he's deceiving himself, and that is possible, especially in this *jñāna* yoga, especially if it is not combined with all the other practices that we have been discussing so far. It can lead to a *cul-de-sac* and you can stay there forever, mistaking it for the destination. Because intellectually, it seems to be simple and glorious, mighty. As we go on, I take up a few of the dialogues from the *Upanishads* for our discussion, and you will see that it's terribly simple. It's not difficult at all!

It is intellectually simple. The words are easy to understand. The concepts are simple, the notions are simple, but what is needed here is not chewing the notions. As we go on, it is good ask oneself: „Is every word that is used as real to me as the shirt on my body?" That is what *realization* means. Is what I'm talking about as real as my shirt, as I in it? Otherwise, I'm merely talking rubbish. Such self-deception is

possible. It is possible for one who has read the *Upanishads* with some commentaries to think: „Of course I understand this!" I doubt very much whether what we explain is plain to ourselves. Only when it is plain, when it is clear within me, it can be externalized. In our case, it`s *ex-plain*, like an ex-mayor who was a mayor some time ago, or an ex-husband! *Explain* in our case means: It was plain to somebody else, not to me, it's not plain to me.

In the case of the sage who engaged himself in dialogue, which is recorded in the Upanishads, the truth was clear, plain, real, and he was able to communicate it to the student sitting in front of him. He explained:

āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.1.7).

In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, the teacher is thrilled: „You're a wonderful student, you ask the right questions!" Wonderful is the teacher who is able to explain this truth, and wonderful is the student who is able to grasp it, understand it, assimilate it. And hence they insisted upon the qualifications of a student. If one is not mature for this understanding, it is perhaps wasted or, what is worse, it can be destructive.

One little story of how it can be destructive, and only one part of this story, we will discuss today. It is said that once upon a time, there was an assembly in heaven, in the realm of Brahmā, the creator. It may be or may not be that there is a reason why the creator is brought in here as the teacher, as among his students were both Gods and demons. If you think of a nice holy man in the Himalayas, he would be teaching only good people, not wicked demons. But the creator being the creator of both Gods and demons, he's equally accessible to Gods and demons. All are his children, thus he was teaching them.

He said: „My children, there is the self, which is infinite. And that is marvelous, that is beyond corruption, beyond hunger, beyond thirst. It's forever in peace, forever in bliss!"

„Ah!" All the Gods and demons listened to it, ardently, with great zeal and enthusiasm. Then he said: „He who knows this, rules the whole world." „That's good!" They were not interested in self-knowledge, which is the knowledge of the infinite, but the last bit was tempting: He who knows this becomes the ruler of the three worlds. Then they both went their own way out, held council among themselves.

The demons were quick. They are always quick! „Go!" they said to their leader, one called Virocana. „Go and find out what it is, so that we may be the ruler of the worlds, not the Gods."

This Virocana came in to see his father, Brahmā, the creator: „Father, you said that there is knowledge of something, the self. What is that knowledge? Can you teach me?"

Brahmā said: „Yes, that's quite simple! Look into the mirror. What do you see?" „Oh, I see myself," that was what he said innocently. „That's it?" „That's it. That is the self."

Virocana said: „That seems to be quite simple." „It is!"

The snag here is that he had answered: „I see myself". – „Oh, if you see yourself, that's all! What more do you want?" To make it doubly clear, Brahmā said: „Bring a basin of sesame oil. Look into that – what do you see?" „I see myself! That's the self!"

Virocana said: „My God, why didn't I understand this without him telling me all this? It's quite simple! The body is the self. One must make the body strong and powerful, mighty, almighty! Eat, drink and be merry – if you go on eating, you will never feel hunger! If you go on drinking, you'll never feel thirsty! It's quite simple, isn't it? That's what this old man said: if I make it strong, I can kill everyone and become supreme in this world! Right! Simple!" He ran away to his followers and told them: „My friends, I have acquired the greatest knowledge in the world! Eat, drink and be merry. And if anyone comes to challenge you, box him." That's the devil's philosophy.

It's pure and simple misunderstanding of the truth, non-understanding of the truth. If I am not mature and I go to the teacher, and the teacher gives me the truth, with my immature mind and internal equipment I am unable to assimilate the truth. And then I complain that the truth destroys me. It's not the truth that destroys me, I'm unable to assimilate it.

There's also a lovely little legend about a very poor man who was also born blind, living next door to a wealthy man. One day, he heard lots of wailing and weeping in the wealthy man's house. He groped his way to the wealthy man's house, knocked, and said: „My friend, why are you crying like this?" „I'm just distraught with misery. My child died."

„That's bad. Why did it die?" „Oh, it was taking milk; then it died." The poor man had never had milk, he was too poor for that. „Milk? What is milk?" „That white thing, man!" „White? What is white?"

That man wanted to cry for the lost child and had completely forgotten the original theme of the discussion. „What is white?" „The color of the crane." The poor man was born blind, he hasn't seen a crane: „What is crane?" He caught hold of these blind man's hand and passed it over his flexed arm: „The crane looks like that." That's obvious, isn't it: the crane looks like that, a crane is white, milk is white. The blind man grabbed it: „Oh my God. No wonder, swallowing this, the child died!"

So, to explain the truth, the teacher gives some analogy, some illustration, and you get hung on that illustration and forget the original theme. The illustration may be needed, but I should not forget the original theme. I need great, intense mental discipline, plus tremendous devotion. That is why again it hinges on the *haṭha* yoga practices. Can you avoid the distractions of the mind and head-on towards the truth, never deviating from the investigation?

If that is not possible, then the whole *jñāna* yoga becomes a study-circle, a sort of intellectual pastime, entertainment. Therefore, they insisted upon that qualification. They said, if the student does not have this qualification – forget it! Don't let me entertain him at all. That is destructive. It's of no use to anybody when this truth is not conveyed to one who is qualified. It is of absolutely no use to that person, on the contrary, it can prove destructive. He can start a cult of his own and call it *jñāna* yoga.

2 Knocking at the Door of Death

We were discussing the qualifications of a seeker, particularly one who wishes to tread this path of *jñāna*. *Jñāna* is self-knowledge. It's translated *wisdom*, but no translation is really adequate. It is total and immediate knowledge of truth, and truth being none other than self-knowledge. All other things are dependent upon my knowing I. On what does I depend? That's all. Two steps, and you are there: Everything in the universe is dependent upon I, and what is I dependent upon?

Real knowledge is according to them self-knowledge, and that is called *jñāna*; not a rational understanding, not an intellectual understanding, not a verbal understanding. That is why they insist upon the qualification of the spiritual aspirant. Words may be used, may have to be used – not always, not necessarily. The teacher must be able to communicate adequately, and the student must be able to grasp adequately also. You must have the proper transmitter, and I must have the correct receiver. Then, then, oh, it goes on fine, marvelously.

Otherwise – I've seen it in some places, I won't mention where – some discussion is going on about something marvelous, and suddenly, there's a question: „What do you think about salt-less diet? Is it good for dropsy?" A dreadful anticlimax! That person was obviously not listening at all, as he was wrapped up in swollen legs. It needs a complete and total tuning. The transmitter must be perfect and the receiving set also must be equally perfect, so that what is described as the qualification necessary for the seeker is almost perfection.

You can see the vicious circle: unless you have reached such a tremendous stage of sensitivity, you are no good as a student. And how do I reach this tremendous stage of sensitivity that is almost the stage of realization? If I have already realized the self, why should I come to you at all? If I do not have self-knowledge, why should I come to you? It's there, in just the same words, in the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* by Śaṅkarācārya. He roundly ridicules scriptural studies: if one is enlightened, the scriptures are of no use to him. If one is a fool, the scriptures are of no use to him either. It's only when you're sitting on the fence that sometimes these things are useful. When you are sitting on the fence, a teacher and a guru is useful, and scriptures are useful.

There is another important factor here, and that is illustrated in a very beautiful story which occurs in the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*. It is the story of a great-born sage called Śuka. Śuka is the author of the *Bhāgavataṁ*. It is said that Śuka was born of a great sage named Vyāsa.

It is a belief that the child that is conceived of a yogi or a sage does not remain in the womb for a whole night, so that it's conceived and immediately born. In the case of this Śuka, the child of the sage Vyāsa, the child was born, and as soon as the baby touched the ground, it became a young man of 16 years of age. An embryo can grow twice its size in some weeks, why shouldn't the sage's son grow 16 years old in two hours or so? Anything is possible!

As soon as he was born, he grew to the stage of a 16-year-old boy and walked away. The poor father was attached to his child, and so he ran after the boy, calling him: „O my son!" When he called out to his son, the son didn't answer, but the trees answered!

Putreti tanmayatayā taravo 'bhinedu (*Śrīmad Bhāgavataṁ* 1.2.2).

He called his son, but because *tanmayatayā* – because the son had found his identity with the entire universe, everything else responded: „Yes! You're calling me."

Then both kept walking on, the son first, and the father behind him. There were a few girls, naked in a lake. The son passed along, they took no notice of him, and he took no notice of them. When this old-aged, white-bearded, holy man came behind, they scrambled ashore and covered themselves. The old man was angry and said: „You silly girls! My young son passed by you naked, and you didn't feel shy. I'm an old man, fit to be your great-grandfather, and now when I come along you feel shy? What's wrong?"

They replied: „He didn't even look at us, he took no note of us, and he had no difference. In your eyes, we are girls. In his eyes, we are not girls, we are his own self. That's why we hadn't to cover ourselves." We don't know who is enlightened, but from these stories, we are led to belief that Śuka was born enlightened.

One day, the father, Vyāsa, called him and said: „You appear to be enlightened. Yet it is better to have your self-knowledge confirmed. It is possible for you to bluff yourself that you have self-knowledge. I'm your father, I'm not fit to judge if you are enlightened or not. Better go and somewhere find a master and get confirmation from him."

The young man went to a king called Janaka, who also was an enlightened person. His name appears frequently in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Janaka was ruling the kingdom, he was an emperor, though he was enlightened, or because he was enlightened.

Śuka went to Janaka's capital. He stood outside the palace and said to the guards: „Tell the emperor that Śuka is here." They went to inform the emperor, came back and said: „The emperor asks you to wait." „Right. I'm asked to wait, I'll wait." In some other legend it is said that the emperor also instructed some of his messengers to ill-treat him. Someone throws some cow-dung over his head: „Alright, that's their business! The master asked me to wait, yes, I'll wait."

One week passed this way. Nothing happened, nothing happened. After one week, someone came along and said: „The master asks you to enter the palace." „Yes, right, I'll move in." Then came lovely girls, someone washed him, and someone clothed him, and someone dressed him, and someone did this, and someone did that. „The master says you must sit on this throne" – and then there was dance and there was music, all kinds of distractions.

„The master asked me to wait here; I'll wait. You dance and you drink, you can do whatever you like. Why am I here? I'm here to see the master. What else goes on?" Yes, what else goes on?

After the second week, the master sent for him eventually. The young man went into the court, into the presence of the great, mighty king and fell at his feet. They looked at each other, and he said: „You are enlightened, what do you want?" „Oh, that's all I wanted."

There's a little bit of a dialogue. When the master, Janaka, gave him some instruction, he said: „Yes, Sir, I have heard this from my father, and I also know that these things are in the scriptures." And Janaka says: „The truth that you heard from your father, the truth that you read in the scriptures and the truth that you have already realized is exactly the same truth that I can teach you." In other words: „Your realization is perfect. No doubt about that."

That is why perhaps *jñāna* yoga is considered the final stage. It is the preparation that is most important, and the preparation itself is the knowledge. The knowledge goes into the preparation and the preparation goes into the knowledge- They are not two, one after the other. They are simultaneous.

Even the word *discipline* means *study*. It's not a kind of drill, like you drill a hole in metal. Discipline means study, I must study myself. And whatever discipline flows out of that self-study is the qualification. A circle again! It is not as though I can go on and practice this discipline like some kind of gymnastics, and then I can come and participate in the contest. Self-knowledge itself brings about this discipline, and the discipline deepens self-knowledge, and as it becomes deeper and deeper, the discipline also becomes sterner and sterner, and tougher and tougher. But you don't feel it tougher because at each stage, the discipline is in strict accordance with your own enlightenment at that stage. Your knowledge of yourself and your discipline are of exact equal measure, parallel to each other.

There is a popular theory based upon that story and on some others, that the guru or the master or the teacher sometimes tests the student to see if he's fit or not. You heard Śuka's story. There is a parallel, an equally interesting story which occurs in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. Does the master test? Is he a teacher or a guru?

I feel it is desirable, meaningful, to make a slight distinction between teacher and guru. The teacher is one from whom I learn skills. I learn French, I learn German, I learn cooking, I learn yoga *āsana*s. But a guru is light. We will hear a nice story from an *Upanishad* about how the qualified student is able to derive enlightenment from other than human beings. We will come to this qualification again and again. Qualification is not something which is in the beginning.

You start off as student and teacher: I am a student, you are my teacher. You teach me the *Upanishads*, you teach me *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, and I learn it from you. The words become more and more clear, the concepts become more and more clear, that's all. There's a sort of intellectual entertainment or embellishment. After listening to you, after being your student for some time, I am able to go and converse with them and they think that I am a clever man. This is one. The guru is something different.

No words may be exchanged, one look – that's all. You taught me no skill. Physically and intellectually and psychologically I return from a visit to you as much a dumb and foolish person as before, but enlightened. Something deep within me has been touched by something deep within you, that's all. So, I prefer to make this distinction.

It is said that the teacher might test the student in order to see if he's mature enough, if he's qualified to receive the light. But it's also possible to view it from another angle: what is seen superficially as a test, may itself be a training!

There is a lovely little story in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. There was a holy man, and he had a son, called Naciketas. The father performed a big religious ceremony. One of the rules connected with this ceremony was that the performer should give away everything he had, especially what he was fond of.

When people want to apply for bankruptcy, they usually hand over all their valuables to their wife or to their children, so that I don't really lose anything; I cheat the creditors. He gave all the cows and the property that he had to his wife and others. The cows were the main objects of gift in those days, and he gave all the decrepit old cows to the Brahmins as charity: „These is all I have, all that you can have".

His little son Naciketas reflected over the whole ceremony and said: „My father is giving away in charity cows which are more a liability than an asset. Why is he doing that?" He went up to his father and asked: „Father, are you fond of me?" „Yes." „The scripture says that you should give away all you're fond of. To whom are you going to give me?" A very innocent, child-like question, maybe. People don't give their sons away in charity. Once, twice, and then thrice – the boy continued to nag his father, and he must have yelled at him: „Go to hell!"

That is very nicely presented in the *Upanishad*:

mṛtyave tvā dadāmīti (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.1.2).

„I'll give you to death!" I'll give you in charity to death. But such was the power of the ceremony he had been performing, that the words proved true. And the boy immediately went away to hell, that's the story.

Probably he was shocked, and he walked away from the father. And probably he was fasting two or three days. The story is that the father said: „I'll give you to the God of death," and that he went to the abode of the God of death. As he found the God of death was absent from his palace, he waited outside for three days, which may mean in simple words that he walked away, and for three days he didn't eat and came to death's door.

That's precisely what the *Upanishad* says! Of course, it is translated literally to mean that the boy went to the kingdom of death and found death absent there. Death is never absent from anywhere! When the time comes, death is never absent from anywhere.

When the God of death eventually meets this young boy, he says: „You are a young, radiant Brahmin boy, and you have been fasting outside my doorstep these three days". A basic, beautiful ethical teaching is being introduced here: If a guest remains without being attended at your door, you lose all your merit. So, he says: „Please choose three boons, which I shall grant you in atonement for the sin I have committed." And Naciketas works all this out in his little mind: „First: My father was very cross when I left him. When I return from you, grant that he should have lost his impatience and anger, and that he would receive me with a pleasant heart."

„Done. Number two?" He had some doubts about some rituals, and Yama, the God of death, gave him some instructions. Right, second disposed of. Now third, the last, final.

Yeyam prete vicikitsā manuṣye astīty eke nāyam astīti caike (1.1.20).

„I heard people discuss death and what comes after. Some people say that after the physical death something survives, and some say, it doesn't." There were these materialists even in those days – they have never been absent – who said: „A man dies, and he's cremated, nothing remains. Would this little handful of ashes come back as a man? Surely not. Forget it!" The so-called spiritual people said that the body is a sort of garb that you're wearing; that you are distinct from the body. These were the two diametrically opposite schools of thought. This young boy says: „Only you know." It's a beautiful thought, if you contemplate this. Who on earth is able to declare with certainty what survives death? Death – nobody else knows.

Is it a story? Perhaps not. We also should go to death's door and knock there and ask. If that is possible, that's the qualification! Is that possible? Is that possible for me now? Knowing that death is everywhere, right here, right now – can I knock at the door of death, die to myself and see what remains? That's what in effect it amounts to.

Though the whole story is caught in lovely, beautiful terms, it's a story where a young boy goes to the abode of death and asks the question concerning life and death. What survives can only be asked of death, and the answer can only come from death. But death is not something which occurs at one point in your history, in your biography. It happens every day! Can I die now and ask now? Can I go to that God of death now, right now, can I die to myself now completely and totally, and ask this question: „Some say there is, and some say there is not something that remains after death. What is the truth?"

If you enact it within yourself now, you will see the whole story not as a myth or a legend, but as a psychological truth, a spiritual truth that is happening to you and to me right now. And out comes the reply from death: „Hey, little boy, what do think you are looking for? Chocolate?" This is not chocolate, this is not a toy; you are not playing with this, this is something serious. The God of death says: „Forget this question."

Who is saying this? Your own ego is saying this: „Forget this! Eat, drink and be merry, why bother about soul and self-knowledge and that, and after and before, and all this *who am I*. Forget it! Have some chocolate, ice-cream!" Your own ego is saying this – now, right now! That's what the story says.

Yama tells Naciketas: „Ask for anything else. You want a long life? You want celestial girls? You want lovely chariots and carts? Ask for it, I'll give you anything. But don't ask about death." And Yama says something very interesting: „Even the Gods do not know this, and even they are eager to know. What are you trying to unravel this mystery for?"

In Vedānta, in Indian mysticism, it is said that Gods, the *deva*s, are those aspects of intelligence that preside over the senses. And even the senses are baffled, and even they do not know what death means and what survives this death. If you inquire – with what do you inquire? Your senses are useless, your

mind is useless, your intellect is useless, because all these are unable to approach this truth, self-knowledge, and are baffled.

So, he says: „Don't try to unravel this mystery." Which means: your ego is resisting self-knowledge, saying: „What is the use of all this? Let's have a nice time. Who is worried about that? It's still far."

This part of the story is considered to be Yama, the guru, testing the student Naciketas. It may not be, it may be training, it may be making him work harder. „I'll place all these. Reject them and you'll go straight towards the destination."

The young Naciketas says: „I do not want all these. What for? As long as there is the certainty of death putting an end in all these, I don't see great fun. They are pleasant, and they give pleasure. But when I remember that death quickly puts an end to all this, they don't seem to be terribly interesting. So, keep all these with you – tell me the answer to that simple question: who am I, what am I?"

It is that question itself that is the answer. The question itself gives rise to wisdom, the question itself gives rise to dispassion, and the question itself gives rise to every virtue you can think of, and the question itself is intense, keen yearning for liberation. These are considered *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*, the four-fold means for liberation. But they are also at the same time signs of enlightenment.

The guru is not testing but training the disciple, so that as you get deeper and deeper into this quest of self-knowledge, you need greater and greater concentration, greater and greater intensity. It's not a superficial toying with ideas and notions where you can pick up a couple of them and drop a couple of them – no! When you get into it – you are in it!

Do you have the zeal, the enthusiasm, the determination to go through it? In order to generate this enthusiasm, the teacher shows you all the other things and points out that these are of no use – go on! Go forward with greater intensity, greater zeal. And so all these, the importance of the scripture, the importance of a teacher and the importance of all these virtues are interlinked and interrelated in that quest for self-knowledge.

3 *Sādhana*: Means of Liberation

The qualifications that qualify a student to understand the teaching are known as *sādhana catuṣṭaya:* four-fold *sādhana*.

Sādhana is any practice that one undertakes to attain something. That which is reached or attained is called a *siddhi*. *Siddhi* is not necessarily psychic powers; I don't know how these two came to be confused. *Siddhi* means *I've got it,* or *I've reached it*, and since perfection, or self-knowledge, was considered the goal to be reached, that was called *siddhi*.

If you want to gain something, to get somewhere, reaching that is called *siddhi* and the measures undertaken to get there is *sādhana.* You might go to South India to a Brahmin house and hear two people talking, and you may hear the word *sādhana.* They may not be talking about anything spiritual at all, they may be talking about good cooking. *Sādhanam ille* means: *the ingredients for the soup are not available* and so I cannot make the soup. It has nothing to do with yoga practice.

In some scriptural texts, *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* included, one who is a *siddha* is also supposed to be capable of running into trouble or creating trouble, as he is one who has gained what he wants to gain. On the other hand, there are spiritual *siddha*s who attain perfection, spiritual perfection, enlightenment, self-knowledge.

Self-knowledge is not knowledge of the other, self-knowledge is knowledge, period! Scientific knowledge is knowledge of something else. Knowledge of the other is what you call *science*, is what you call *philosophy*, is what you call *theology* – all this is knowledge of the other. But here, it is *self-knowledge*. Self-knowledge means knowledge, period. Without the other! Can knowledge remain free of the other? That is the basic question.

Knowledge can be directed externally to know something else; that is the normal way in which the mind functions: when the mind begins to function, it grasps something other than itself. The mind functions through the senses. What are the senses? The sense of sight, the sense of hearing, the sense of taste, the sense of touch, the sense of smell. The sense is not the sense organ, just as I is not the body. The body is an instrument used by I, by me. The sense of sight is not those eyes, the sense of sight uses the eyes to perceive. The sense itself, the *indriyā*, is that with which you see in your dreams. That sense uses these eyes to see. The mind registers all these sense-impressions, and when it thinks, it uses those impressions which have already been gathered through the senses, stored in the mind, in itself; by reviving it, it thinks, it raises concepts within itself.

So, the mind's effort to grasp something other than itself is the world. The effort of this intelligence to reach out and to experience something other than itself is the world.

There's a lovely mantra in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. We have discussed the beginning of the dialogue between Yama and Naciketas where Yama warns Naciketas and congratulates him on his intelligence and his wisdom:

parāñcikhāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūstaṯsmāt parāṅpaśyati nāntarātman (4.1).

„Don't waste your time trying to figure out why is it that the mind flows towards the objects; objects are what the mind creates." Objects do not exist apart from the mind's creation of objects. If the mind doesn't flow out, there are no objects. And the mind's flowing out of its own center is what is called *object*.

Now it is possible for us to sit and wonder: „Why does that happen at all?" The question *why* is what creates another object. It assumes that the object has an independent existence, either created by God or created by the mind, it doesn't matter. Assuming this independent existence, I ask the question *why*.

How do I stop asking the question *why*? By providing that question with some kind of answer, any kind of answer*: why not?* Some scriptures adopt this *why not?*, some scriptures say: *God's will*, some scriptures say: *your foolishness*, *your imagination* or *māyā*. In effect, all these answers mean: „Please don't waste your time". Yama, the guru in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* gives a different answer. *Parāñcikhāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūḥ*: the creator so made the mind and the senses that they are interested in objects of other than their own substance, and therefore they constantly fall upon the objects which are of other than their own substance.

The word used for *the creator* in that mantra is *svayambhū*. *Svayam* means *oneself*, *bhū*: *that which is*. There is a lovely little game: whereas all these things were created by God, God was not created, and therefore the self-existent being is God. – Have you understood what that God is? Not at all! But the strange fascination of intriguing words, bombastic words is that which creates a fantastic illusion in me that I understood.

Svayambhū, with a capital *S* – must be a capital *S*! *G* – *God* with a capital *G*! If it is a small *g*, which God is that? But if you put it as capital – „Of course I know! Fantastic!" When the *svayambhū* has a capital *S*, I go away with the feeling „yes, of course I know it's God: God-created", which is a very delightful interpretation. The creator created the mind and the senses with outgoing tendencies. Who is the creator, I don't know.

Means: don't worry about that, you will understand. Take it as an axiom, to begin with, that the mind and the senses have an outgoing tendency. Take it as an existential fact: this is how I see. I open my eyes, *I* see her, not the sight itself, not the substance of the sense-organ, not the substance of the sense, not the substance of the *indriyā*.

Now we are coming onto the proper track. When the eyes are open, they see – *you*, not themselves. This is knowledge of the other: *I see you*. Knowledge, period, is what sees, what animates, what makes the sight function.

Kaściddhīraḥ pratyagātmānamaikṣa dāvṛttacakṣuramṛtatvamicchan (4.1).

Says the guru in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: „This is how it is!". So that you may not worry yourself over and over again: „Why is it so, why is it so?", they said: „God made it so". One shouldn't run into this dangerous circular argument: „If God made it so, why should I reverse it, why should I go against it?" You

have heard this argument: „God made tobacco, why shouldn't I smoke it? God created meat, why shouldn't I eat it?" God gave me the lake, why shouldn't I jump into it?

All those arguments are double-edged swords; it's very risky to use them. The moment I open my eyes, I see it that there is an object, created by the mind or created by the creator, I don't know. Where the *creator* is mentioned, maybe it's the mind that is referred to. Whereas the fool gets caught in the objects, *kaściddhīraḥ pratyagātmānamaikṣa dā amṛtatvamicchan*: desiring immortality, the hero turns his gaze within.

Because movement is always away from the center, the turning within, the gathering of the rays of the mind, the faculties of the mind towards itself is no movement. That is why some very great ones here, including Śaṅkarācārya, declared that *nāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena*: that which is the self is not known by effort, by doing anything. You're running away from God all the time, and you cannot run towards God! You're running away from the center all the time.

> *Cittasya śuddhaye karma na tu vastūpalabdhaye*
> *vastusiddhirvicāreṇa na kiṃcit karma koṭibhiḥ.*

This is from the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, verse 11: „Work leads to purification of the mind, not to perception of the reality." Activity leads to purification of the mind. The illusion that there is an object is washed away by the turning back. The realization of truth is brought about by the discrimination – he says *discrimination*, *vicāra* – and not in the least by ten million of actions.

Vicāra is *correct movement*, movement in itself. We have been discussing this spiral movement: any motion, if it is haphazard, becomes a spiral and goes away. Motion within itself is pure and simple vibration, energy that is sentient, fully conscious and vibrant. And there is no movement in it, there's no motion in it.

What do we do in the name of yoga? In the sixth chapter of the *Gītā* again we have the same problem: why should I practice yoga at all if the self is forever there? *Ātmaviśuddhaye* (6.12): you're not going to create the self, merely to remove the impurities that cloud it!

Why is this mind reaching out, out of itself, out of its center? In order to experience something other than itself, apparently. When that desire for objective experience is removed, that's it. One doesn't even wish to say: „There is knowledge of the self," because then you are objectifying the self again.

Knowledge of the self is self-knowledge, which is knowledge, knowledge which is the self, knowledge which has no object at all, and therefore in that state, knowledge is not even the subject. When one alone is, why do you want to talk? Only when someone else is there, you start calling. That is the self which is knowledge.

To come back to the duality where we are caught: it is the externalization of the mind, it is that motion that creates the object. Ramana Maharshi says this is the simplest way of explaining it: what happened to the world when you were asleep? When the mind begins to function and move – that motion itself is the world. After gathering the experience of objects through the senses, the mind seems to store all

those impressions within itself and move in those impressions during dream and possibly during the waking state also, creating the world and then moving around it, experiencing the world as if it were real, because it created it.

If you have seen children at play, you can understand it quite easily. This is the reason why the theologians who accepted the world as a reality suggested that the world has been created as a *līlā*, as a *play*, as a divine play. Children play with toys, treating them as though they were real, because they have created them. Having clothed them with reality of their own volition, they play with them as if they were real. That is where we are. We have the world around us; this seems to be absolutely real, so far as I am concerned – now, what do I do? What is the *sādhana* for getting back to that state where knowledge is without an object and therefore without a subject?

The first *sādhana*, or the first aspect of the *sādhana*, or if you want to cling to the idea that there are four means, the first of the four means is known as *viveka*. If that introduction was clear, then *viveka* is quite simple. What is *viveka* has been laid out to you from the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* and has been translated into *discrimination*. One has to be discriminatory in order to understand this discrimination! It's not discrimination in the sense of division. It is discrimination in the sense of wisdom, it is discrimination in the sense of clear-sightedness.

Nityānityavastuvivekaḥ (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 19):

„The understanding of the impermanent as the impermanent and the permanent as the permanent is wisdom." One has to tread very softly here: it is not discrimination between the real and the unreal. It is not understanding of the difference between the permanent and the impermanent – you are still dividing, you are still struggling, and as you go on struggling like this, you are likely to be caught more in the impermanent than the permanent, more in the unreality than the reality, because you are struggling to avoid the unreality all the time.

Can the unreality be seen as the unreal and the reality understood to be real? It's quite simple. That is *viveka*. You see that this is unreal, unreal in the sense that it has been created by your own mind. It is as real as the mind allows it to be real!

When you are examining this, when you are trying to understand this, what you are doing is meditation already. Right on the first step, that is meditation. You're constantly inquiring into this, into the nature of experience and you begin to see that all these experiences are changing. There is constant change in our life. What is constant in this change? The seer, that which becomes aware of the succession of the changes. That which is aware of all this, that doesn't change, does it? If even that changes, something must be there to see this procession. What is it or who is it that is aware of this procession of constant change?

When you say *I*, the I becomes an object. And then, once again you clothe that I with childhood, youth, old age, *I was there*, *I was here*. What is aware of even these changes that have taken place in relation to this I: I was a baby, I was a young man, I went to school, I went to Rishikesh, I came here? This I seems to be moving all the time, but what is it that is aware of all these changes?

That inquirer is the unchanging reality, not the inquiry nor the object that is temporarily picked up in order to carry on this inquiry. The objects that are used and the effort put into it is the *sādhana* or the means.

What is it that is making all this effort? What is it that is inquiring into this? That is knowledge. May be, may not be, because the moment you use that word, you are going to make that an object. That's why in this particular, this *jñāna*-approach, it is considered as razor-edge: you are trembling all the time. The moment you use a word, you find a verbal answer, you find a notion, it becomes an object. Therefore, one gets hold of this object and rejects it: I'm not interested in this object at all, I'm interested in what it is that is aware of this as object. Please note the question very carefully – I'm not saying: „I want to know what becomes aware of this object", no: what is it that becomes aware of this *as an object*? So even the existence of the object is not taken for granted.

That is *viveka*. And this is the constant companion of one who treads the path of self-knowledge. That's what makes it tough. If you watch yourself very carefully in that process, to begin with, there seems to be an inward flow of attention. We are used to externalize the motion. Because there has been an externalized motion of energy, even arresting it seems to be an inward motion of the same energy.

While you are looking at her, you are also looking at what it is that thinks *she is so-and-so*. Something seems to open up within you. Something *seems* to open up within you; nothing opens really, because it was that what was seeing all the time. It was that knowledge, intelligence, that was experiencing all the time, but when this externalized motion is arrested, there is feeling of an inward motion, introversion. And its expression in life is called *vairāgya*.

Vairāgya is translated *dispassion*. Sometimes, they even regard it as an aversion to the world, which makes it look as if the yogi is a world-hater. Some of them take it literally and they hate the world. But it's possible that it does not mean that, because one who abandons the world often keeps it in his own mind all the time.

This *vairāgya* springs from *viveka* when it is known that the world is in the mind, not outside. The world is in the mind, and it is the mind which is seen outside – we have gone into it once before: what is seen outside is only what the mind sees within itself. The world, in truth, is only in the mind, in fact is in the mind. I am aware of the world only as it is presented through the brain to the mind. And the description of the world is also entirely dependent upon the mind and its moods. The world outside is never apprehended in its reality, in its own form.

> *Na rūpam asyeha tathopalabhyate*
> *nānto na cādir na ca saṃpratiṣṭhā* (15.3).

That is a verse in the 15th chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, where Kṛṣṇa says: „You don't even know the world as it is, you only read into it what you want to read into it. The world to you is what you like it to be or what you are afraid it is". It's never seen for what it is!

This happens to us: I first determine that he is my friend, and then he is my friend. If he hurts my feelings or if he does something to harm me, then I think he is my enemy and I see: he's an enemy. In other words: I never know him for what he is – never!

Once I see that the world is in the mind, then there is *viveka*, wisdom. The world is in the mind, the world is the mind. The world is thought, the world is my own thinking. The reality of the world is the intelligence, the consciousness in me, not an external object. When that is clearly seen within, then there is no attraction. The world does not charm me anymore, the world does not distract me anymore, the world does not delude me anymore, the world does not fool me anymore.

That is dispassion, so that I'm not looking at the world through rosy spectacles or dark glasses. We're all the time looking at the world either through very rosy spectacles: „Ah, marvelous! Wonderful place to live in!" or through dark glasses: „It's frightening". Both these colors are abandoned by knowing that the world is not that, the world is the mind.

The reality of the world is the substance of my mind. When that is seen, the coloring is dropped, and that is *vairāgya*. That *vairāgya* itself is the source of all the virtues, *ṣatsampat* – there are six virtues we will discuss in detail. That *viveka* and that *vairāgya* themselves bring about virtue, goodness, discipline, self-discipline. You don't have to go round, asking people to discipline you or find out what kind of vows must I take, what kind of resolves must I adopt. When the unreal is seen as the unreal, and the reality seen as the reality and all covering of the mind is dropped, then virtue exists, comes into being without any problem at all. You're not attracted by anything, you're not repelled by anything, there is pure virtue in its simplest form.

All these are based on *mumukṣatva*. *Mumukṣatva* is literally *desire for liberation*. It is not a desire, it is yearning for liberation when we vaguely see what is real and what is unreal. Then there is a bewilderment and a wonderment within oneself: if this is real, why am I so terribly trapped by what I know to be unreal? Why is it that in spite of all this, all my knowledge and all my understanding, all my *viveka*, why is it that I'm still caught, I'm still trapped in this world appearance? The eagerness to get out of that trap is known as *mumukṣatva.*

4 *Ṣatsampat*: Six Spiritual Treasures

Viveka and *vairāgya* we have seen in the other branches of yoga we have discussed, but something of special significance in this path of *jñāna* is the third means, which is *ṣatsampat*. *Ṣat* means *six*, and *sampat* means *wealth*: the *wealth of six* qualifications. One who is not endowed with this wealth is poor spiritually, and therefore may not be able to relate to the teacher of wisdom. Of course, they are based on the fourth in the list, which is *mumukṣuṭva*, a deep and keen yearning for liberation.

Mumukṣuṭva is often phrased as „burning desire for liberation". The burning desire must be a consuming desire: that which burns must be consumed, then it is real. Very often it is brought in to burn something else. If I'm hired by you, you are my superior, then there is burning desire to liberate myself – from you, it means. Which means: the I is getting stronger. I want to free myself from the clutches of my religion! Which means again: I want to be more independent and more glorious and more egotistic. I'm not saying all these are good or bad.

„I don't want to be caught up in the business world or in the domestic sphere. Please, So-and-so, tell me what to do. I want to be free!" means: the I wants to be absolutely free from all restraint. It's good to see that this is not the burning desire for liberation that is referred to here: *mumukṣuṭva* is not the burning desire to liberate oneself from being dominated by others.

I may even feel happy if I know that it is the ego that is to be dealt with; not you, not someone who tells me what to do, not my religious leader, not the boss and the government, but it is I that is to be dealt with. The other things fade into insignificance. You may be the most horrible, nagging wife; it serves my purpose, nag me as much as you like, because it is the inner resistance that has to be dealt with, it is the I that has to be dealt with, not you. And you keep nagging me, you keep commanding me, you are dominating me from morning till night – you are helping me by hurting and by bringing out that which is capable of being hurt: the ego.

That's why, incidentally, the foremost qualification for a devotee is given as *tṛṇād api sunīcena*: the devotee or the aspirant for liberation is „humbler than a blade of grass". I believe there are some forms of grass which the more they are trampled upon, the more they grow. That is the nature of an aspirant. He is not worried about being dominated by others; he is terrified of being dominated by the self, and therefore the desire for liberation is desire for liberation from oneself.

These sages who were in the Himalayan forests were not familiar with a Coleman stove, which burns with great sound and fury, and then it's gone. They were used to seeing firewood burn. A wood-burner is a most beautiful thing: it burns without any noise, without any sound, any fury, any ups and downs, any „you know, *phew*, now I'm going to get God-realization" – it doesn't say anything, quietly burning, quietly livening its own things, but all the time patiently and calmly reaching up. And that is burning desire.

The burning desire is calmly and constantly burning with an upward direction, that's all. No sound and fury will do here. Nobody is interested whether you burn. We are not interested in your liberation. That

usually *putt-putt-putt*s like a Coleman stove, it starts whirling altogether. And very often the master was very concerned about this. Be careful in both ways: don't give way to juvenile enthusiasm – that's what he used to call it, *juvenile enthusiasm* – and try to stick on with this, persevere in this, because if you turn back, the reaction may be so terrible that you may turn out to be worse than what you ever were before.

That's not what we are looking for. We are looking for steady, enlightened desire, not just a burning desire, but an enlightened desire for liberation. The enlightened desire for liberation is not a kind of fire that burns something else, it consumes itself. If that is understood, this six-fold spiritual accomplishment, wealth, is easy to understand.

The first is *śama*. *Śama* is self-control or control over the mind. There are no adequate expressions for this, because it never occurred to the founders of your language. They never thought of putting a restraint on the mind, they were more interested in training it, strengthening it, sharpening it, making it work. What was the origin of thought and how to regulate thought from there, that was never thought of. Thought was never turned upon itself, so that one could go to the grassroots of thinking and to see: can something be done there so that thinking does not become destructive and destructing? That is *śama*.

Śama is not merely thinking positively, thinking a good thought. What is thinking a good thought? The good thought doesn't occur naturally. What comes up naturally is something else. And then I sort of whitewash the whole thing with a good thought. But that's not thinking! That is plastering from outside, that is cosmetic thinking or, to put it more correctly: it is thinking that you are thinking. I want to think I am thinking because I have never understood what thinking means, what thought means. I don't know where it happens.

Knowing this, those whom we may call *rāja* yogis invented some techniques: meditate, try to dive deep within yourself and bring out what a thought means. Try to build it from there, not from here; not from above to below, not from outside to inside, but from below, from the grassroots! Can you tap it from there? Where you are born, where the I is born, that is where thought is born! Not outside, not on the skin-level where I can inject a few nice thoughts into it – that doesn't work. Thought springs where I springs. The rest is wishful thinking which is a synonym for thinking I'm thinking.

If you put a chocolate into your mouth, something tastes it and that says: „That is chocolate", not the mind. The mind comes in much later, merely to identify that this taste means chocolate. First find who the taster is – that is the source! That is the source of I and that is the source of thought. That is what thinks, not something superficial.

When this *mumukṣatva*, the desire, the enlightening, consuming desire for liberation is introduced at that level, then what is called *śama,* or control of mind, or control of self, or self-control, happens. In that there is no struggle at all. If you sow potatoes and think: „It's going to be tomatoes", it will not. Put some tomatoes here, and it will grow into tomatoes. If I'm knowing in that manner how to bring about a total, deep internal revolution, that works. That's *śama.*

A corollary to it, a great aid towards this *śama* is *damaḥ,* which is *restraint of the senses*. What is *sense*?

Viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ
rasavarjaṃ rasopy asya paraṃ dṛṣṭvā nivartate,

said Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (2.59). *Viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ*: if you starve the senses, you deny them what they are used to, what they are clamoring for, and if you persist in this long enough, you may nearly forget what chocolate tastes like.

Rasavarjaṃ: „The taste has left" because I don't know what the senses mean. It needed Kṛṣṇa's sense of humor and mischief to introduce this in such a subtle way. *Damaḥ* means *control of the senses*. Not merely plucking the eyes out! That is easy. But somewhere deep within, there is a craving, still there is a craving, if not to see, but to dream of; if not to hear, but to dream of; if not to taste, to dream of.

Possibly you have come across people who are constantly talking about their good old days, and when I was so-and-so, and when this happened to me – it's never gone, it's never really dropped. The senses are not these external sense organs. The senses are with which you see, you hear, you taste, and you touch in your dreams, whether they are night dreams or daydreams. Can you put restraint there, then probably you're working your way towards control of the senses, which in turn aids control of the grassroots of the self.

I suppose you see that at nearly every stage what is ultimately going to be described as the final goal of *jñāna* yoga is involved from moment to moment. While you are controlling the sense of taste, you are already meditating, you are already in *samādhi*. If you are not, you are not going to achieve anything.

You can stop eating chocolates for six months, and for the next six years you will be talking about eating chocolate: „I completely avoided eating chocolate for six months!" You never let people know how you compensated for it later. And even when you are not eating chocolate, you make a *japa* of chocolate: „Chocolate I didn't eat, chocolate I didn't eat, chocolate I didn't eat, chocolate I didn't eat, chocolate …" One *mālā* over! Who is interested in that?

Swami Sivananda used to sing very nicely:

Form is not a fetter, I is not a fetter, sight is not a fetter,
but the excited desire is a fetter, know this poison well!

That's it! It's not the eyes that disturb, it is not the seeing that is a disturbance – it is natural! But the desire that excites the sense within – do I know what that is to bring about a change there, so that it never excites all this? That is restraint of the senses.

Whereas *damaḥ* is the restraint of these senses, *śama* is restraint of their common ground, which is the I, which is the mind, which is from where all these arise.

Then comes *titikṣa* which is *endurance*. Endurance is fairly simple to understand. Swami Sivananda was using a famous formula: „Even this will pass away. Balance your mind in pain and joy." That's a beautiful motto which enables us to remain steady and enduring, whatever happens. When there is an impulse to

complain, when there is an impulse to crumble, then turn within and utilize very provocation to find the self. „Look inside and balance it" – a real *sādhana*!

Someone insults you – he's doing you a great service. Thank him, mentally, because when something comes up: „How can this happen to me?!", that is what you have to deal with, not the other fellow. He calls you a fool and is gone, like people at the airport. If at the airport someone gives you a dirty look, this does not worry you at all. You don't know who that person is, and you are probably never going to see him or her again. That's true of you and me, no? That person in the airport I bump into for ten seconds, you and I are going to be together for ten years, and what is ten years in eternity? Ten seconds? Less. So why make a distinction? Even this will pass away. You may even be my son, living with me for 30 years. What is 30 years? In eternity: nothing! When that is seen, you are not upset.

Here you can see this *nityānityavastuvivekaḥ* (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 19) again, the permanent and the ephemeral, the passing, the fleeting: this relationship is fleeting. Therefore, in life: adapt, adjust, accommodate, somehow get going, knowing that all these things will pass away. That's it – don't be too serious.

One has to be to be truly, barely serious when it comes to the inner world. There, there is *titikṣa*. And the *titikṣa* is immediately connected with *uparati*: turning away, turning away, turning away. It's not merely turning my back to the world, which means, if you live in New York or Toronto, you turn your back and then you go to Kootenay or somewhere else. It's not a physical turning away that is meant.

Uparati: Is the mind still flowing towards worldly achievements, worldly goals and worldly ambitions or is it interested in finding itself, in discovering itself, in seeing itself? Is the thought thinking of something else or is the thought thinking of its own source? If it thinks of something else, that other is created as an object. If it ceases to think of the other and is flowing towards its own origin, then immediately there is the realization that the other – what you considered to be the other so far – and you are one, like two people sleeping in bed. When they are fast asleep, that is the only time when they are really and truly one. Not when they are thinking: "We are one"!

When the mind turns upon itself, then oneness alone remains. When thought flows out, thinking of the other, the other is born. Otherwise, there is no other! That is *uparati*. *Uparati* is not merely turning away or renouncing what I don't like, as if this were a great virtue.

The next virtue is *śraddhā*, which means *faith*. What is faith?

> *Śāstrasya guruvākyasya satyabuddhyavadhāraṇam*
> *sā śraddhā kathitā sadbhiryayā vastūpalabhyate* (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 25).

Why do I come into this path at all? Because there is a problem which I cannot solve. There is pain, there is sorrow, there is confusion. Vaguely I see that I am making my own life miserable – vaguely. If I don't see it, I don't come into this path at all. If I am constantly blaming someone else, I'll go bashing them up, I'll never come to this path. Vaguely there is a feeling that I'm making my own life miserable, and I'm asking: „It is possible for me to overcome this?"

If at that point you are able to overcome this, you don't come into that path at all; you're enlightened already, you don't need any path. At that point, you are neither here nor there. There is a confusion which seems to be difficult to dispel, there is a veil that it seems I am unable to lift. So, I ask a guru, and the guru probably points to a scripture, or explains a scripture, or the guru himself is a scripture. And I'm told that this is the truth, this is the method, or this is the way to overcome the sorrow that you have created for yourself.

What do I do at that time? It's obviously not fully clear or satisfying. It's a new approach, it's a new point of view. I couldn't adopt the point of view, I couldn't look at it from that point of view, in that perspective – if I could, I wouldn't have come here. This is something new. That is what *confusion* means. There is an old, confirmed conviction; I have convicted myself and that is why I am in the prison of myself. That is what is called *conviction*: conviction is when you have convicted yourself and imprisoned yourself in your own self.

With that I come to you. You're not a guru yet, you're a teacher, and you present a different point of view, a different truth, a different concept, idea. It is still a concept, it is still an idea so far as I'm concerned. And when the two come together, there is fusion. That is called *confusion*! Confusion is not something that is to be dreaded. It is when you reject the other one that you go away confused because the fusion has not taken place. If the fusion has really taken place, if the confusion has really taken place, it will produce enlightenment!

But then, the old conviction is so strong that when you come to the new point of view, you say: „Ah, no!" and you go back: That is the ordinary type of confusion, that I don't want to give up my conviction. The whole is a waste of time! At that stage I must have the sincerity and the earnestness and the faith, which suggests two things to me: one, I couldn't solve this and therefore I took to this path, and two, therefore I cannot reject it.

When I reject it, what am I left with? The old conviction has been gone through; it doesn't work. This represents a new angle of vision. This is something new. On the surface, it doesn't look plausible, it doesn't look satisfying. It doesn't seem to make any sense! „Ah, rubbish." May not be rubbish! This is something new; it may also be rubbish, alright. What do I lose? Nothing! So, I have some faith. I may not call it *faith* yet, I may call it a belief, because I haven't experienced it. It is when the confusion takes place, when the fusion takes place, and with that *trust* – that may be a better word – with that trust I get into it.

I still haven't had the final experience, but it's no longer a foreign substance, it is fully and totally assimilated. It's not a conviction now, it's knowledge! I'm not confined, I'm liberated, I'm freed. I was confused, I came here, and I found a new light, a new path, new angle of vision.

That faith is quite different from what we call *faith*, very different. If you have the faith of the mustard seed, look at that mountain and say: „get away from there", and it'll go (see *Matthew* 17:20). It may be a terribly unorthodox viewpoint, but when I read: „You must have the faith of the mustard seed," it may mean: go to the mustard seed and ask: „What kind of faith do *you* have?"

It works! The mustard seed says: „I have the faith that I am a mustard seed." What is the source of that faith? The immediate knowledge „I am a mustard seed". That is something beyond the intellect, it is beyond thinking, beyond feeling, beyond all that, it's a totally integrated, immediate knowledge: „I am a mustard seed."

What is it that entertains this thought „I am a mustard seed"? The cosmic mind or the cosmic intelligence, not the mustard seed, the mustard seed itself being the creature of this cosmic intelligence which at that point entertains the thought or the idea or the notion: „I am a mustard seed". So, what is the faith of the mustard seed? The faith of the mustard seed is cosmic consciousness. If you also can overcome that ego-sense and dive into that cosmic consciousness, you see that the mountain is not there. It's quite simple, isn't it, because the mountain is also the same cosmic consciousness. There, the cosmic consciousness thinks it is a mountain and here the cosmic consciousness thinks it's a man. You don't have to say: „Go!"; it has gone already.

That is faith. Faith is not a kind of belief, it is the dropping away of the previous rubbish, garbage, the previous conviction. Freeing myself from that garbage, freeing myself from that conviction is faith, is freedom.

The last one is *samādhāna*. *Samādhāna* is a synonym for *samādhi*: when all this takes place in the mind constantly. This is not a kind of yoga exercise you practice in the morning and then you forget all about it. That is something that keeps you company 24 hours of the day, at least, if not a little more. When this takes place, there is utter peace, you are not disturbed by anything. You are not avoiding anything at all, you lead what is called a *normal life*. But since there is that constant self-examination or self-observation to see what the self is and how it plays all its tricks in 1001 ways, that observation brings about *samādhāna*, utter equanimity.

A pleasant experience comes along, and you look at it: „Nice, but I know even that will pass. Thank you for coming and thank you for going, bye-bye." A very painful experience comes along: „So … welcome. How do you do?" *How do you hurt me*, that means. „How do you have the power to hurt? You want to go? Bye-bye, see you tomorrow morning!" The mind is in a state of constant balance, it is never perturbed.

5 Wake Up and Get Enlightened!

We round out the discussion on *sādhana*, the qualifications or the means for self-knowledge, with the further description of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. We saw how this boy, Naciketas, approached Yama, or the deity presiding over death, or faced his own death in the fashion of Ramana Maharshi: „I'm death. Now what happens?", and Yama suggested: „Why do you inquire about who you are and what you are going to be after death? I'll give you as long a life as you'd like to live. I'll give you all the wealth of the world, and all the comforts and pleasures that you might desire. Why don't you go on like that?"

„You want to know what survives the disintegration of the body. May I suggest: you live a long life, you enjoy yourself, and probably you will discover that what lives now is what survives death. You assume that something dies and want to know what lives after that. Live a hundred and more years and see if you can discover that which lives now. That is what lives after!" This might be another interpretation of the same story.

In a situation like that, you pick and choose what your own inner nature dictates. So, here is a boy who says: „I want self-knowledge". Place in front of him a very long life, pleasure, enjoyment, wealth, power, not in an attitude of testing. Self-knowledge is there, you have asked for it. That's there. But have you finished with all this, or are still you looking for one of these along with that?

It's not a test, it's more a training. „Have this!" And when you're enjoying this, something that was hidden in you before jumps out and says: „Ah, it's nice!" If it's nice, enjoy yourself a little more, so that when it comes to an end, it comes to an end forever, whereas before this training, your desires and cravings were lying hidden. What do you want self-knowledge for? „I want to attain immortality, I want to have eternal bliss!" Is that right? You still don't know what it means. If you had been told self-knowledge means cutting your throat, then probably you would have been frightened away. But it was described as eternal life and perennial bliss, unending happiness, so you are still looking for happiness. And he says: „Ah, wait a moment. Are you finished with this little happiness? Come to that eternal happiness later."

It may sound a bit unorthodox: the person who longs for eternal bliss is not necessarily superior to the one who wants to have immediate enjoyment. He may also be looking for some kind of extended pleasure, a glorified, haloed pleasure. Is it possible to destroy the whole thing by the root? When you don't want immediate pleasure and you don't want bliss that is eternal, there is no wanting at all, there's no craving at all. It is possible that what looks like testing could also be a matter of bringing about an understanding of the nature of life, the nature of craving.

Naciketas had said: „I don't want all this, I'd like to have self-knowledge. I don't want even eternal bliss! I merely want an answer to my question. I want to get rid of this doubt." There is a cloud, there is a cloud of doubt, there is a cloud of confusion, and I come to you to remove that confusion. When the disciple assured the teacher that, „that's what I want; I don't want pleasure, I don't want eternal bliss" the master, Yama, says:

Śreyaśca preyaśca manuṣyametaḥ
tau samparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ

śreyo hi dhīro'bhi preyaso vṛṇīte
preyo mando yogakṣemādvṛṇīte (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.2.1).

„That's very beautiful. You know, in life, there are these two directions." One sees these two directions without comparing them, without necessarily judging them. One is called the *śreya*, which is *good*, the other is called *preya*, which is *pleasant*: there is a path which leads to the good and there is a path which leads to the pleasant. These need not necessarily be opposed to each other. When a man is standing at the crossroads, he sees in front of him these two, branching off. He looks at both, each one in turn. He looks at those fruits and chooses according to his own nature.

There is no condemnation here: *śreyo hi dhīro'bhi preyaso vṛṇīte* – one who wants liberation, emancipation, salvation, he chooses the road that leads to the ultimate good, or immediate good. *Preyo mando yogakṣemādvṛṇīte* – the other one is so bold, so courageous; he would still like to acquire and to have. That is what *yogakṣema* means. *Acquisition* is *yoga*; here, the word *yoga* has a different meaning. Acquisition is *yoga* and having it, preserving it is *ṣema.*

Preyo mando yogakṣemādvṛṇīte – unfortunately, this word *manda* has been taken to mean a stupid, wicked and vicious person. It only means a dull-witted person, and that is not said in a derogatory sense. The person who chooses the path of *śreya*, the good or immediate salvation, he attains salvation. He's there already. But what happens to the other fellow who goes along the path of acquisition and possession? He will soon find out that this doesn't help. He will do it, he must do it. You cannot do it for him, nobody can do it for you. Very soon, I will come to the understanding that this does not give me what I want. I want heaven; that does not give me what I want.

One day or the other, the person is going to wake up to this fact that nothing can give me what I want, and the trick lies in dropping this wanting. As soon as this wanting is dropped, I have everything, because I want nothing. There is no condemnation here. One person chooses this path, one person chooses that path. Both go round and round till eventually something happens within, and there is freedom, and there is immediate liberation.

After listening to that, Naciketas asks: „Tell me what is beyond this wanting, wanting to go to heaven, wanting to enjoy here. What is it that is beyond all wants?"

Anyatra dharmādanyatrādharmā
danyatrāsmātkṛtākṛtāt

anyatra bhūtācca bhavyācca
yattatpaśyasi tadvada (1.2.14).

The *śreya* is *dharma*, where you get immediate salvation or you may go to heaven immediately, experience the kingdom of heaven here and now. The path of pleasure where you are forced to commit

sins, and unwittingly sometimes you do good also without serious intention, is the path of *adharma*. „Is there something other than all this?" this young boy wants to know.

In reply to that, Yama gives a very beautiful answer:

> *Sarve vedā yatpadamāmananti*
> *tapāṁsi sarvāṇi ca yadvadanti*
>
> *yadicchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti*
> *tatte padaṁ saṁgraheṇa bravīmyomityetat* (1.2.15).

It's a mysterious and mystic answer. *Sarve vedā yatpadamāmananti* – „there is something which all the *veda*s really describe, not doing and not non-doing". That which all scriptures proclaim is something beyond action and inaction. It is that. And it is in order to reach that that people perform austerities, penance and meditation.

It is not attained by action, and yet in order to realize that which is eternally and that which is not an attainment, one puts forth effort – what for? To clear the debris; not to bring the sun into being, but merely to blow the clouds away.

Yadicchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti – desiring that, people observe celibacy, continence, or, if you adopt the other definition: people practice whole-souled, dedicated seeking, constantly allowing one's total whole being to flow into the direction of the self. The flow is not external, the flow is internal. Therefore, it becomes a total and complete and full circle immediately. It doesn't go out as a spiral, but as soon as the impulse, the movement of energy takes place within, it is completed in a circle. That is called *brahmacarya*. *Brahmacarya* is when the aspiration finds its goal immediately, when the seeker seeks himself.

> *Yadicchanto brahmacaryaṁ caranti*
> *tatte padaṁ saṁgraheṇa bravīmyomityetat,*

„I'll tell you that in only one syllable" – not one word, but just one syllable: *Oṁ*.

That's it. If you do not understand what that means, this is, I'll explain it to you a little more. If you understood that, that's perfect: „That which is indicated by this *Oṁ*, which is yourself." I don't know if you understand the joke here. Why doesn't Yama say: „You know, there is an inner light, there is *oho-ho*, and if you see that …"? Then the mind creates an object, the intellect creates an object and goes on chewing it, cannibalizing it interminably.

Previously, I thought all this – this mountain, this lake and the trees, and then all of you and all of I – is real and went on chewing the unreal reality. But now that you have told me that there is a self, there is an *ātmā*, there is Brahman within you, hidden within you, I create a lovely little Brahman in me and go on chewing that. It's the same thing. Yama's answer suggests what on the surface looks mysterious and mystifying. *Omityetat*: „You want to know the supreme secret? It's *Oṁ*."

„Oh, *Oṁ*."

It's an answer you didn't expect at all. It comes and hits you from unknown sides. And the mind is still immediately. When the mind is still in that way, the confusion that the mind created comes to an end.

When you give a logical answer, the mind is fed. That is the fuel that the mind was looking for. You ask a very beautiful question, and the teacher gives you a perfectly logical answer. The mind wakes up: „That's a clever answer!" But that hasn't taken you one millimeter ahead of where you were. If instead you get a totally un-logical answer, your jaw drops, the mind stops. To begin with, you are wondering: are you mad or am I mad? And instantly realize that both of us were. That's the end of mental activity, and therefore of the confusion.

In order to do that, you must be an enlightened person, and the disciple also must be a good disciple. Otherwise, you'll lose the disciple. Never mind, not so serious! After having given this shocking answer, the teacher goes on to give a little bit of help. When the mind was thus still:

> *na jāyate mriyate vā vipaścin*
> *nāyaṁ kutaścinna babhūva kaścit*
>
> *ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ purāṇo*
> *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre* (1.2.18).

This nearly is a verse from the *Gītā*, or the *Gītā* copied it from here:

> *na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin*
> *nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ* (2.20).

A little change, but the meaning is the same: that which you sensed when you gasped, that has no death and it was never born, and that never dies.

> *Ajo nityaḥ śāśvato'yaṁ purāṇo*
> *na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre* (2.20):

It's only the body that perishes, it is only the life of the body that comes to an end. That *Oṁ*, which is your essential nature, which is the truth – all that verbal explanation comes later – that *Oṁ* or that which is indicated by the word *Oṁ* does not come to an end at all. Why doesn't it not come to an end? Because it wasn't born. It has never come into being. It does never come into being, it *is* the being. It is the being, and it doesn't undergo any change at all, like space.

The space which you call *this studio* did not come into being when the walls were put up. The space was there. What came into being when the walls were erected, and the roof was laid? Nothing more than the materialization of an idea which arose in somebody's brain. Someone thought of building a room here. This idea materialized as this, as the walls and the roof, the floor having been there before. But the space in this studio didn't ever come into being, it was there! And since this space in this room was there before, it'll continue to be. It didn't perish when the room came, it will not perish when the room is

pulled down. Nothing ever happens to it. Even when the walls were put in their place and the roof was laid, this space has not really been pushed away.

Space cannot be pushed away. Space cannot come to an end, and therefore space cannot come into being. Even so, that which you are is eternal. It doesn't come into being, and therefore doesn't cease to be. You does not come into being and therefore you does not cease to be. It is there, the self is there all the time.

There is a crazy idea that I am so-and-so; that idea *I am so-and-so* comes to an end, because it came into being, exactly like this room. An idea arises that I am a personality, and that personality acquires its own characteristics, including the materialization of a body. Once the body has come into being, that body creates its own sensory avenues, and the senses keep following in their own particular avenues.

> *Indriyāṇi hayānāhurviṣayāṁ steṣu gocarān* (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.3.4).

The *indriyā*s or subtle senses have nothing to do with you at all. These subtle senses are like horses which run along some road, some tracks. The track along which the sense of sight runs is called *form*. The track along which the sense of hearing runs is called *sound*. The path along which the sense of taste runs is called *taste*. That's all! These are horses which are running here and there along their own tracks.

> *Ātmendriyamanoyuktaṁ bhoktetyāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ* (1.3.4).

When these senses function in this manner, a conjunction of *ātmā*, *indriyā* and *manas* takes place, and that is called *experiencer. Ātmā*, the self is unborn, it doesn't come into being at all, it is everywhere. *Indriyā*, the senses are also everywhere, and they flow along channels which are their own. The eye sees light, but the ear does not see light, the tongue does not see light – you can't stick it out and see. They have their avenues along which they run.

While the movement of the senses along their own avenues in cosmic consciousness goes on, thought jumps up and says: „I – caught it, I caught it, I caught it!" That is experience. If that thought can be avoided, paralyzed, then there is no experiencer. When these three come together, when these three are linked, there is what is called *experiencer*.

The conjunction of these three is called the *experiencer*, and this conjunction will go on as long as you remain asleep. Therefore, Yama warns:

> *Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata*
> *prāpya varānnibodhata*
>
> *kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā*
> *durgaṁ pathastatkavayo vadanti* (1.3.14).

It's a fantastic mantra. *Uttiṣṭhata* – *wake up*! And *jāgrata* – once having woken up, *keep awake*! Don't go to sleep again.

Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata
prāpya varānnibodhata.

And then go to these holy ones – *varān*. *Varān* is *a superior person*, in the Taoist language a person who is enlightened, a person who is able to inspire you. *Prāpya varānnibodhata* – and then get enlightened. Waking up is your business, enlightenment is a matter of confrontation. It may not be possible for one alone to achieve this. When you wake up, go to somebody, anyone who is able to inspire you. And there, in that confrontation, enlightenment takes place.

Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata
prāpya varānnibodhata.

Even the man who pursues the path must one of these days wake up. Life is capable of doing that. Life is capable of doing that; it may not be in the next 50 years, which means: it may not be in what you call *this lifetime*. What is 50 years in eternity? In the life of this earth, in the life of the universe, 50 years is nothing, it is just one moment.

Life brings about this awakening; sooner or later. That is the purpose of life and that is the purpose of the various experiences that naturally seek every living person. That is the purpose, that is the object of the experiences that we are subjected to: pleasure and pain, pleasure and pain, pleasure and pain, happiness, unhappiness, honor, dishonor. All these come alternating so that at one stage, they may be strong enough, to bring about an awakening.

It's usual to say that the wise man wakes up sooner and the duller person takes a little more time. Even that tends to promote arrogance in some of us who think: „Oh, we are wise, I've woken up already!" It's not true. He who wakes up is called *a wise man*, and how long the fellow had been sleeping you don't know. So, forget all these comparisons that I'm wiser, greater than you, and you are wiser than me, and that sort of thing, it's stuff-and-nonsense. Everyone caught up in this cage of individuality is bound to wake up. And that's the meaning of life, that's the purpose of life. That's the purpose of the varied experiences that life brings us.

„Having awakened", Yama says, „don't go to sleep again. Keep awake." Because it is possible after waking up to go back to sleep. Not after enlightenment; once the light has been unveiled, you don't go to sleep, you are not bluffed again. But when you wake up in the morning, it is possible to go back to sleep.

Keep awake! And when you have been spiritually awakened, and when you are able to remain awake, then go to a holy one, an enlightened person, one who is *varān*, one who inspires you, one whom you chose to be your inspirer! It's up to you. It may be anybody on earth. Whereas traditionally, commentators to this suggest that the person whom you chose must be able to enlighten you, this is a bit of a circular argument. How do I know that he or she will be able to enlighten me? I come to you. I come to you, feeling that I have faith. I have confidence that you will be able to inspire me, enlighten me.

Prāpya varān – *varān* is *to choose*, though it may also mean *a superior person* in the Taoist sense. Any person is superior to me at that time. I am confused! There is a cloud of doubt, but I'm awake, within

that cage I am awake. All that I need at that point is a contact with somebody, rubbing, and that will produce heat. It doesn't matter who it is! Someone with whom I can communicate:

> *kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā*
> *durgaṁ pathastatkavayo vadanti.*

Then you discover something extraordinary, and that is the answer to the question that the young boy had asked: „What is it that is neither this nor that, neither righteousness nor unrighteousness, neither good nor evil?" *Kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā* – it is like the razor's edge, *durgaṁ pathastatkavayo vadanti* – even they who have trodden the path have declared it to be so subtle, so fine that it eludes your understanding. That is why even if you are awake and even if you are vigilant, it's good to go to someone and derive inspiration!

Can I not enlighten myself? Yes, it's possible, if you can see that the path to self-knowledge is so subtle, so fine, so that you are constantly vigilant, vigilance itself becomes your guru, the inner light, in which you are able to see that you cannot see it. The moment it becomes visible to you, it has slipped through your fingers. It is neither this nor that, neither this nor that. Can you live every moment of your life with this *neither this nor that, neither this nor that*?

That is what this *kṣurasya dhārā*, the *razor's edge* means. The razor's edge is not something which is so sharp that it will cut your foot or is dangerous to tread, but it is so fine, so subtle, so unseeable. The edge of a razor, when it is seen, is blunt, and the middle part, when it is seen, is not in the middle – it is gross, it's too wide. And when you draw a line, saying: „That is the middle," it's not the middle, it has got that much of dimension.

A point is a concept. You can never describe a point on a piece of paper, however sharp the instrument is; it still is a circle. You take the sharpest pen or pencil you have and put a dot on a piece of paper – it is not a point. You put it under a microscope, you can see it as big as your head. It has got its own center.

The center is something invisible, invisible even to the intellect. What do I do? Revisit it: neither this nor that, neither this nor that, neither this nor that – if one's whole life can be neither this nor that, then there is self-knowledge. To become aware of that, one has to resort to the company of the enlightened one.

Lastly, he gives a slight, slight hint:

> *yena rūpaṁ rasaṁ gandhaṁ śabdān*
> *sparśāṁśca maithunān etenaiva vijānāti*
> *kimatra pariśiṣyate etadvai tat* (2.1.3).

There is a whole series of *etadvai tat* – *this is that*. *That* is not described, but the means to that is described. What is the self? Neither this nor that. Having demanded that it should be neither this nor that, the teacher gives a description of the means in order that the student may not despair: self-knowledge is not too far away.

Self-knowledge is not something you have to go round the world three times for, but one has to be watchful, cautious in getting this. It is only with the help of self-knowledge that one is able to see: it's there. It's there, every moment of your life, but you're missing it, because that vigilance is not there, because you dropped either on that side or on this side, either you reject the experience, or you are caught in it. When your eyes are open, your eyes say: „Ah, what a lovely person! I like to see her" or they say: „Oh no, I don't want to!" Instead, it is there. What is it that sees? You're free.

It's so simple. You are so caught up in this acceptance and rejection, and therefore you miss that which sees. That which enables you to see, that is it! That which enables you to hear, that is it! *Yena rūpaṁ rasaṁ gandhaṁ śabdān sparśāṁśca maithunān* – my God, this is you, it is there! You don't have to go round, go on repeating, go on a pilgrimage, stand on your head, looking for it – it is there. Open your eyes, it is there! That is what sees, that is what hears.

Can I grasp it, can I understand it, can I conceptualize it? Then again, I've lost it! Can I realize it? It is real – what do you mean *I realize it*? That is the subject! That is the subject, that is the knowledge, that is the self – so don't try to look for it! In trying to look for it, you are already losing it. What do I do? *Haṭha* yoga. Again: what do I do? If I must do something, say: „Neither nor". I look at this person, I see that it's a charming one – ah, knock it down: not charming. I'm trapped. „Oh, no, that's the devil!" – a trap. Acceptance and rejection, likes and dislikes, good and bad, righteousness, unrighteousness – knock all these things down.

Etadvai tat – that is that. As long as the mind functions, use the mind's own energies to knock itself down. Why have I been given an intellect? In order to understand that the intellect is impotent. That's enough! When the mind moves, bring it back to itself and say: „You are useless." Do not try to create a thing called *the self* with the mind – it's not possible. Do not try to conjure an image called the *self* or *ātmā* with the help of the intellect.

Neither this nor that, neither this nor that, neither positive nor negative. It's not far, because that is what sees. It is not far, because that is what hears.

6 *Upaniṣad*: To Sit Near Each Other

When a student is equipped with the means of liberation, it is possible that he seeks the light, and in the course of the seeking, he finds sources of illumination within himself. The source of the illumination is called *guru*. The light is within, but someone who can direct the attention to that inner light is the guru. Or the inner light itself is the guru.

Though the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* story has been dramatized and made to appear rather exciting, those of us who are familiar with the biography of Ramana Maharshi may even entertain the feeling, if not the belief, that the whole story is based upon a psychological trip, an inner journey, not necessarily going from here to a thing called the *world of death* and there encountering the God of death. All this may or may not be true; but what is true is that this boy confronted death, and that is what Ramana Maharshi had.

As a little boy, he lay down one day and he felt he was dying. Such was the totality of his being that it was not merely a thought, but a fact. The thought had become fact, the body had turned blue, the breathing had stopped and so on, and then he was looking at the body, he began to ask: „Who is this that is looking at the body now?" He was still young. Quite likely that this Naciketas' experience, or the death-experience, is very much like that. You don't have to go somewhere looking for death; death is around us all the time.

Like the mind, like the heart, like all the cells in the various systems – the respiratory system, the circulatory system, the excretory system, the reproductive system – the death system is also built into the body. It has not been examined properly because it is not possible to examine. When the circulatory system is functioning, the death system is kept in abeyance. When the death system comes over, the rest of it has ceased to function. So, it becomes difficult to examine the two together. But it is there in the body, just as fire is hidden in wood till its time comes. It's there. Therefore, I don't have to go to a place called the *abode of death*; the body is the abode of death. If I want to, I can face death even now, right now. It is possible that the death experience itself was the guru of Naciketas.

One who has this inner experience, the death experience that Naciketas had, is still asked:

> *uttiṣṭhata jāgrata*
> *prāpya varānnibodhata* (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.3.14).

Sure, you had some experience, the experience of the inner light. But it is better to go, and have it attested by someone who has also had similar experience, as there may be some confusion in the experience, the reality mixed with illusion. In that encounter, all that will be sifted, and the truth made clearer to you. In order that we may not go away with the impression that I must go somewhere and get the knowledge of self-realization from somebody, once again the *Upanishad* goes on to say that this truth is not far away from you, spatially.

This truth is not beyond your reach in the sense of being on the other side of the lake, but it is with that, through that, by the grace of that alone that you are able to look, to breathe and to live. That is there!

And therefore, you are able to see. That is there, and therefore you can hear. That is there, therefore you are able to speak.

So, you reach out to the guru externally to confirm the inner experience. And in order that you may not be led away by the externalization of the guru, the guru throws you back upon yourself. That is called *upaniṣad*. One of the meanings of *upaniṣad* is *to sit near each other.* To sit near each other, that's all.

What happens afterwards cannot be defined. There may be a mere look, there may be a few words exchanged, but truth is not communicated, unless you use the word *communicate* in the sense of *finding the oneness* where the I dissolves, and therefore the you dissolves. When both these have dissolved, because they are not two, what exists is the truth. As long as the I remains, there is no communication; I'm blocking, I is blocking it. And in the encounter between the disciple and the guru, they find out how best to reach that spot.

To illustrate this still further, there is another lovely little *Upanishad* and a story. The *Upanishads* are full of stories. If you are too serious, you go to sleep, the mind rejects it. Words themselves are symbols, and loaded symbols. Every word has the load of centuries of misinterpretation and misuse; what you see in that word may be quite different from what I see in that word. So, sometimes they resort to illustrations and stories.

Though the *Upanishad* does not specifically say so, it suggests that a seeker approaches the guru and asks a question. The first word of the first question happens to be *kena*, and therefore, they used that as the title of the *Upanishad*: it is called *Kena Upaniṣad*.

> *Keneṣitaṃ patati preṣitaṃ manaḥ*
> *kena prāṇaḥ prathamaḥ praiti yuktaḥ* (1.1).

The question was obviously asked by a student: „How does the mind function?" If we ask this question, the mind itself provides an answer which is its own function. How am I going to arrive at a true answer to that question? He is intrigued, perplexed. This is a question that you are not going to be able to find an answer to without the help of someone, whatever form the help may take. It is not necessary for that person to answer that question; he will throw a question back to you. But you are puzzled.

I see the mind functions and makes the body function; that seems to be fairly clear. I'm sitting here because I thought I should sit here. And when the time is up, I think should leave this place, and I leave this place. So thought precedes action. But thought is an action, mental action! How can thought precede a thought? Not possible. So, I come to you with this question: I see that thought precedes physical action and thought precedes verbal action. I also see that thought is an action, mental action. What precedes that mental action? How does it, from where does it arise? Who makes that thought arise? That's the question.

Kena prāṇaḥ prathamaḥ praiti yuktaḥ – I can live without the eyes, I can live without the ears, I can live without the nose, but I cannot live without the life-breath, *prāṇa*. Why is that?

If one eye is lost, the other can do its function, but how is it that if life is lost, it doesn't have a spare part? Who ordained that the life-force or *prāṇa* should be supreme? Why didn't he so ordain that the eyes must be supreme, and that even after the life comes to an end, the eyes keep seeing? It's possible – you have to look at it without any set ideas. It is set ideas, rigid ideas that prevent us from asking any questions at all – we take the whole thing for granted. And there again, we must be like little children, asking why is it that the duck is able to swim so nicely and why you are not able to swim.

Kena prāṇaḥ prathamaḥ praiti yuktaḥ. One needs a healthy sense of humor to understand the *Upanishad*. „Who is it who ordained that when breath departs, everything comes to a stop, whereas when the eyesight has departed, when I lost my sense of hearing, nothing came to a halt?" That is the question.

I hope you also realize that it is not a theological trip. The man does not go to his teacher and say: „Please, can you show me God?" It's too childish. If you behave like that, they screw your nose or something and say: „Here is God." You deserve it! You get what you deserve. No, this is a fundamental question, fundamental and simple. I must see this. I must realize this. I must come to grips with this: who makes me think and function? All the rest is added onto it:

> *keneṣitāṁ vācamimāṁ vadanti*
> *cakṣuḥ śrotraṁ ka u devo yunakti* (1.1).

„How do all the senses function and who is it who ordains all this?" That's the question. And what does the guru do? How would you answer this question? *God*. „Oh, I see! God! Aha!"

Answering a verbal question with another word is not an answer, it's evading the issue. Is there a verbal answer to a question concerning thought: „Who prompts thought?"? How does the teacher enable you to find the light in such a way that the question is answered nonverbally? That is *upaniṣad*. And therefore, it is so difficult to commit the whole thing down to writing. Therefore, it is that when you read a book called *The Upanishad*, it often makes no sense at all. You go away with a bunch of words.

I must be alert to be able to question, again. You must be able, again, to confront the situation. Both you, my teacher, and I, the student, must come together, ready, vigilant, not without affection, not with hostility, but not with docile submissiveness. I must have supreme and tremendous affection for you, devotion to you, but at the same time intense devotion also to the job. In another *upaniṣad*, called *Śvetaśvatara Upaniṣad*, there's a lovely mantra:

> *yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau*
> *tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ* (6.23).

„He who has supreme devotion to the guru, and equally supreme devotion to God" – who is *God* here? The question! – „unto him is the *upaniṣad* revealed easily."

So, I come to you, I have great devotion to you, otherwise I wouldn't have come. But the devotion that I have for you does not prevent me from being totally devoted to the quest, the quest being God, the

truth being God. I am devoted to truth and therefore, I come to you to help me find this truth. I'm devoted to you, and I am devoted to this truth, one not inferior to the other, one not less to than the other.

In that encounter, almost confrontation, where my devotion to you is not questioned by my devotion to truth, I don't say: „I am not satisfied with what you are saying," because I am devoted to you. I don't reject you because I'm seeking this tremendous truth. But I'm not going to abandon that, swallowing a bunch of words that you are uttering, because I am devoted to you. The devotion to both these is equally strong.

Then, what does the guru do? He does not turn you away, because there is this affection, there is this devotion, he cannot answer verbally, because verbal action is twice remoted from truth. By sitting near each other, there is already an exchange of spiritual energy. That is what is called *śaktipāta*. *Śaktipāta* means an exchange of energy. It is almost entirely dependent on the student, the seeker. If I am a seeker, then I come to you with whole-souled, total devotion; I'm devoted to you with my mind and with my heart, with my whole being. It is then that *śaktipāta* takes place, the transmission of energy takes place. And in that, there is a non-verbal understanding.

In the famous story of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, it is said that four sages, called the Sanatkumāras, were the direct mind-born sons of Brahmā, the creator of the universe. Direct products of Brahmā, the creator, directly jumped out of his head – you can imagine what perfection of wisdom they should have had. And even they were confused! They were wandering and wandering. They knew everything; because they were the source of all these scriptures, it is obvious that they knew everything.

While they were wandering in search of enlightenment – so you and I are not so bad! –, they saw a young boy sitting under the tree, and as soon as they saw him, they just knew: „That's it!" Don't say that they were tired of wandering – when you're tired of wandering, you go to sleep. They were full of energy and zest and zeal, enthusiasm about this truth. When they saw him, they knew … When they saw him, they knew.

How does one know who it is, whom he should approach? I come to you and I look at you and I feel, you are the person I am looking for, and I must seek your help and assistance, that is: you are going to be my guru. You are not yet my guru because the enlightenment has not taken place. But you are going to be my guru – how does one know?

That question again, even that question cannot be answered. If there's a herd of cattle, grazing on a farm, and if you have one calf, you don't know the mother, all the cows look alike to you. How to find out whose baby this calf is? Just let it go, it goes straight to its mother. In exactly the same way, the seeker knows where to find what. If you are a true seeker, then you know. Otherwise not. You go from one to the other, you can keep going for a long time. Probably they also did. Or probably they merely looked at somebody and said: „No, it doesn't inspire", this other person doesn't inspire me. They may even have their millions of followers, but we don`t click. I'm not going to question him, merely we don't relate to each other.

It's not judging who is the good guru, bad guru, better guru. I'm not interested. When they saw the young man, it clicked. They gravitated towards him, sat down at his feet, looked up to him. And he looked. Perhaps he smiled and raised his hand in what is known as *cinmudrā*, *gesture of wisdom*.

That's all they needed. They were enlightened. The gesture of wisdom meant: unless you abandon these three, self-realization is not possible. What are those three? Physical, mental, verbal action; waking, dreaming, sleep; the physical body, the astral body, the causal body. Abandon all these, and then you realize that fullness alone exists, the infinite alone exists.

So, verbal exchange, exchange of words, is not a necessary part of the guru-disciple encounter. In the case of the disciple, all that he needs is that total devotion, total devotion to the truth and equal devotion to the teacher who represents the truth for the present; who represents the truth and whose validity or importance is the truth.

I'm devoted to you, but I'm equally devoted to the truth and my devotion to you is the devotion to the truth, so that I'm not hooked onto your personality, we are not together forming a cult. I'm devoted, totally devoted to you, my teacher, because I am totally devoted to the truth that is embodied, ensigned in you and that is going to be revealed in our encounter. If that is clear, then the path is clear immediately, there are no obstacles from there on.

The transmission takes place mostly non-verbally. Even when words are used, the actual transmission is non-verbal. And there again, both of us have to be sensitive to this, to see if, when you are using a word, I am responding to it or not. Therefore, the Upanishad involves a dialogue, not merely a monologue. You ask a question, and the teacher goes on answering – that's classroom. Here, it is dialogue so that at every stage the teacher is watching if you are responding, if we are speaking the same language.

In the *Kena Upaniṣad*, the teacher says: „Ah, you want to know that? That's quite simple, very easy. Who makes the mind think, function? The power that is within the mind."

When you read it on a printed page, it makes no sense at all, you're even tempted to laugh at it. What a funny answer! He asks: „Who is it that makes the mind think?" and he says: „That is a power within that mind; that power makes it work." Or, if you are of the faithful type, you say: „Oh, I see. There is a power within this, there is a *śakṭi* within," and then you start making an image of Śakṭi, and Śakṭi means Durgā or Lakṣmī or Sarasvatī.

Ravi Varma

Figure 14. Lakṣmī

Śrotrasya śrotraṁ: that, that is that in your ear, in your sense of hearing. It is that which makes hearing hear. It is that which makes mind produce a thought – what is it? I came to you with a question, and you are throwing it back at me.

This discipline is necessary. I come to you in order that I may get the intensity of the quest. Can I not sit under a tree and do the same thing? Yes, you can, if you have the same intensity that Naciketas had, the same intensity that Ramana Maharshi had, and if the question burns your heart so intensely that you don't need any external assistance; the external assistance is a distraction. You just sit there and can go into *samādhi*.

If that is not possible, you need someone to keep the intensity intense all the time. I'm asking you, my teacher: „Who is it that makes the mind think?" and you are merely answering with a non-answer: „There is a power within the mind which makes it think." That's not what I asked. „Here is a cap. Do you know what that is?"

Or, if I drop into a theological frightfulness: „Ah, I see, it is God in my mind, and it is that God that makes me think." Then the guru comes and says: „Be careful, this is a thought!"

> *Yanmanasā na manute yenāhurmano matam*
> *tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhi nedaṁ yadidamupāsate* (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.6).

„Be careful!" he says. „If you fall into this trap, you'll never get out of it!" If you fall into the trap of knowing, thinking that you know, thinking that you know what produces a thought, then you'll never get out of that. The mind creates a thing called *God*, that itself being a thought, and if the mind accepts the thought as the reality, then there is no further inquiry, it's finished. I'll remain the same fool forever and ever and ever.

Therefore, the teacher here throws a bomb; the whole technique, the whole method, the whole approach is taught there right in the beginning. *Yanmanasā na manute*: don't think that you have understood the answer.

See how the intensity is created and kept up. *Yenāhurmano matam*: „It is by that that you are able to think." „Hey, that's the question I came to you with!" „Okay, then understand that. Dig deeper and see, *tadeva brahma*: that is Brahman." Brahman is not a set of characters – *b-r-a-h-m-a-n*, that's a word, that's a veil that has nothing whatsoever to do with the truth.

Nedaṁ yadidamupāsate: „not what you worship here", that's the literal translation. What is God, what is truth, what is the ultimate truth? „That which enables you to think, that which enables you to breathe, that which enables you to see, that which alone is and because of which all this is."

„Ah, now I understand …" „Oh, foolish!" he says immediately – immediately!

Yadi manyase suvedeti daharamevāpi
nūnaṁ tvaṁ vettha brahmaṇo rūpam (2.1).

An almost scandalous attack: „If you think you know it, you're a fool," he says.

Yasyāmataṁ tasya mataṁ
mataṁ yasya na veda saḥ (2.3).

„He who knows knows not that he knows." Because that being not an object of thought, that being not a product of your mind, how does the mind know it? The mind can only know what it has itself produced. The mind can comprehend only what it has itself given birth to. The mind is the worst form of cannibal: it produces something and chews it up, eats it, consumes it. What the mind knows is an object, not the subject. It is that that enables you to see, it is that that enables you to hear, it is that which has appointed the life-force as supreme.

7 The Right Questions in the Right Spirit

It is usual in these Upanishadic dialogues between the master and the disciple to lead the student back into himself for the extremely simple and good reason that the omnipresent is closest to me in me.

The omnipresent is everywhere; no doubt, it is on the other side of the sun, but it is closest to me in me, and therefore, I am somehow made to dive within myself to see what is the reality or the truth concerning me, what I have been calling *me*. What I have been calling *me* – already there is a confusion there. If that confusion is resolved, then here and now, at the very rock-bottom of my own thinking, my own heart, the omnipresent is touched.

That which is here is everywhere; that which is everywhere else is here. So instead of looking around everywhere, why not look here? That's the simple logic. And therefore, whenever there is a direct encounter, almost a confrontation, between seeker and the enlightened, the enlightened one slaps the seeker's inquiries back on himself: „Look within and see who is the one who asks this question. That is self-knowledge!"

Unable or untrained to look within and to become aware of the awareness, there is a looking outside, there is a seeking outside, there is a flow outside, there is an emotion. The emotion is not arrested, stopped, but the current is reversed, the direction is reversed. That's all.

That is what in the guru-disciple encounter the guru almost invariably did. There are a few of them where there is debating, especially the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. It's considered the earliest and it's also regarded as in parts totally unintelligible. The language seems to be clear, but what it is talking about, it's all in riddles, and therefore not many people devote too much attention to it. It's also voluminous.

Most of what one may call *philosophical debates* happen in the court of a king named Janaka. Whether it is the same person who later happened to be the father-in-law of Rāma, we do not know. But it is said that Janaka was a king, and he was deeply interested in spiritual quest. And as far as his royal mood demanded, he held philosophical debates in his court.

It is said that he assembled in his courtyard several thousand cows, all first-class cows. In addition to that, all their horns and hoofs were gold-plated. He would get up in the court and announce: „Ladies and gentlemen" – *ladies* and gentlemen, because there were quite a few terrific women philosophers in his court – „you see the cows there. I offer them to the wisest among you. It's not my business to judge." And one looks at the other.

There was a legendary character called Yājñavalkya who is a powerful personality in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. He looked at his disciples: „They belong to me. Ladies and gentlemen, if you think I am unworthy of the prize – challenge. If you defeat me, I'll give it back to you." Very often he was challenged by this lady called Gargi. She must have been a powerful figure, and she nearly riddles him with her questions. On such an occasion once she asked: „What are all these worlds? How are they supported, all this stellar system, the suns, moons, stars, heavens, who is holding them up?"

You can't say *tat* or that sort of thing, then you run into questionable statements. Yājñavalkya comes up with a very brilliant and simple answer: „Space." What do they exist in, what are they supported by? Space!

„Aha. Caught me right there," she says. „In what is space established?"

„The infinite*, akṣara.*" *Akṣara* means that which does not undergo any change, that which does not decay, that which does not come to an end, the imperishable. Space is held in its position, sustained, by the infinite.

He and she come close quite often in this *upaniṣad*; once she turns round to the other ladies and gentlemen: „Keep quiet. You can't argue with him. He's supreme. Even I cannot defeat him in debate; none of you can obviously challenge him." And they all keep quiet, which implies that she was herself very highly respected in that assembly. On such occasions, there is also a hint that that which is here, deep within oneself, is also everywhere, and that is what sustains the entire universe, which implies again that what is regarded as the self is not the me.

Yājñavalkya must have been fabulously wealthy, and he had two wives, Kātyāyanī and Maitreyī. He must also have been fairly advanced in age because at one stage, in one chapter in the same *upaniṣad*, one fine morning he announces to his two wives: „I think I've had enough. I'm going away."

Going away to a homeless state was a rather tough job. In those days, the hermitages and the ashrams were inhabited by people like him, great scholars, great thinkers, great mystics and great teachers who were not *saṃnyāsin*s or swamis, but who were ascetics and hermits. They often lived there with their wife or wives, practicing penance, meditating and so on. The life of renunciation was a life of total renunciation, there was no half-measure about it, no hypocrisy about it. When this man, living the retired life in the hermitage, decided that he didn't even need the roof over his head, he just walked away, and that's all.

He just kept walking where the spirit moved him. If anyone came to ask a decent question in the proper spirit, probably he would give an answer. Otherwise, he was not interested in communicating. In order that such communication might take place, you go to the hermitage. There are ascetics, quite learned, wonderful people, go, if you are to go there! But only those people went to these wandering monks who just needed one little tap. And that's all they did. They wouldn't even stay in one place for two nights, so nobody could be their disciples; all the disciples belong to these ascetics who lived in the hermitages.

This wonderful man announced to his two wives: „I've had enough, I am leaving. You know, I've got plenty of wealth. You might share it. And bye-bye." Maitreyī was probably the second wife. She was a bit cleverer, and the *upaniṣad* specifically mentions that Yājñavalkya was especially fond of her. She asks a very simple question: „I've heard you talk to your disciples here, and talk to king Janaka, and you have often mentioned self-realization, immortality, the realization of the immortality. Tell me: where can I buy that? You'll give me plenty of money. Can you also indicate where I can get that with my share of the wealth?"

He said: „Who told you?

Amṛitatvasya tu nāśāsti vitteneti (2.4.2):

I never said that one can buy self-knowledge. By being wealthy there is no hope of attaining immortality. Oh, you can lead a very comfortable life." It's quite possible that she was also getting on in age. „You can lead a very comfortable life as a wealthy woman."

„Aha! Then why don't you let the other woman have my share of wealth also?"

„Then what do you want?"

„I would like to know how to attain self-knowledge before you go. I'm not going to stop you from going. But tell me."

The *upaniṣad* suddenly blossoms into a spiritual honeymoon. He says: „I'm going to leave you in half an hour, but I love you intensely. Come on, sit down near me, close to me." Again *upaniṣad*: „Sit down close to me, sit close to me. I'll tell you."

It's a fantastic spiritual romance. He says: „I know you love me, and I love you. *Na vā are* – not for my sake do you love me, *ātmanas tu kāmāya patiḥ priyo bhavati* – it is because of that self that the husband is dear to the wife".

Na vā are sarvasya kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati
ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati (2.4.5).

Why do we love one another? Why do we love wealth, why do we love power, why do we love children, why do we love family? It is because of the self.

There are intriguing and misunderstandable stories told: a man who carries his wife, his child, and some wealth across a river, and he finds that he couldn't make it. What does he drop first? The moneybag. „Never mind if it goes away, I can make money again." He goes a little further and he finds that he is being washed away. Then, according to the legend, he drops his child: „Never mind, my wife is still there, we can have more children." Then he proceeds further, and he cannot even hold onto this wife. He says: „Alright, let the wife go. I can marry again." Sounds cruel, but this isn't the end of the story.

Most people in the world would probably behave in this way. But the question hidden in it is: what survives when ultimately I even drop this body?

The family survived the loss of money. My wife and I survived the loss of the children. I survived the loss of my wife, but something survives the loss of this body! The inquiry must continue. If it does not, then you are trapped in one way or the other. Hence the self is not the self that is assumed to be real, but something else. It has been described as the light that guides you when even the voices become silent – you can experience this yourself if you want to. Even in total darkness, I know what is my front and what my back: how?

That is the self. Not the selfishness or the ego-sense which assumes to itself the sovereignty of the whole life, but that, that something which is beyond all that, beyond this body, beyond this ego-sense, beyond these senses, beyond the mind. That is the self which Yājñavalkya is talking about.

> *Na vā are sarvasya kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati*
> *ātmanas tu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati:*

„It is because we are all linked in that self that we love one another." That's a completely different vision which transcends the body, the mind and the intellect. Suddenly he announces: *Ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ* – „That self, my dear, that must be seen, that must be heard of."

When you go to a teacher, you want to hear about that. When it is seen and heard of, it erodes your faith in the material existence, in the physical relationship. When it is seen, not with these eyes, but with the eyes of wisdom, with the eye that is wisdom, then it erodes, it destroys the attraction that what I have seen with these physical eyes has for me. This is what I have seen with my eyes, and therefore my mind is tempted, my mind is attracted, my mind is distracted by these objects. And when I constantly hear about the self which is different from all this and when I begin to see inwardly and internally that that may be the truth, then life takes on a completely different dimension. That is when true *vairāgya* arises.

Once I've heard this, it is not yet real to me. The hearing was real, the words are real, but the thing is not real to me, I'm still struggling. And I should not swallow it! I should not assume that what the words indicate is real to me. What do I do? First *śravana*, which is *hearing*, and having heard it: *manana*. *Manana* is usually translated into *reflection*.

Reflection: I've heard this man say, not for the sake of this is all this here, but for the sake of the self is all this here. I've heard this. Then I go away and reflect, reflect in the sense of holding the mirror clean and steady, so that what I heard from him is steadily reflected.

When the whole attention is focused upon this truth that is reflected in my own mind or *buddhi*, the previous notions that ruled there come up. All these crazy formulas that have been fed into us and out of which we are made, with a *God in heaven* and, *you are my friend*, and somebody else *is my enemy*, all these things.

When I reflect the teaching of the master, it is indeed because there is that one self everywhere, so all this is dear. And when I reflect that, previous concepts come up, my own mental conditioning shows up: what about me? You have an opportunity to examine those mental conditions and see them for what they are: unreal. That is the confusion. Maitreyī herself tells him: „You're confusing me!" He says: „No, wait a moment. I'm not confusing you. Reflect over this, reflect over this a little more deeply. Try this. You say that you heard from the master that you love all these, because all these are the oneself."

„My enemy, too? He's my enemy, I don't love him at all." „Ah," he says, „that's a different story. How do you know he's your enemy?" „Oh, my father didn't like him." „Your father didn't like him, and so he became your enemy – how?"

„He called me a fool, and so I don't like him." „Just because he calls you a fool, he becomes your enemy? Why?"

This little bit of argumentation takes place within yourself. You're not assuming that the teaching is absolutely real, or at least that you have understood what the teacher has been talking about, and you do not assume that the concepts you were brought up upon were real – that he is my friend, and he is my enemy and that I must love him, and I must hate him. That's how I have been brought up. I've been told that this is good and that is not good. I must run after this and avoid that. All these ideas exist in me, and then here comes a master who says: „You love everything because the whole thing is your own self."

It doesn't seem to make much sense. Now let us examine. That examination is called *manana*. It can be done alone, and it can also be done in company, two or three of us getting together and discussing the teachings of the master.

Then as the truth sinks, sinks, sinks in, suddenly you say: „My God, he was right!" And the truth which was heard from the master, and which was reflected upon later, alone or in company, suddenly becomes true, it is realized. It is realized and assimilated. It becomes as real to you, or perhaps more real to you than your own body. It becomes as real to you or more real to you as the other ideas were before.

We have been fed with all sorts of notions, all sorts of concepts, all sorts of traditional beliefs, and they acted so far. I was told that I was an Indian, I was a Brahmin, I was a swami, et cetera, and the whole life was ruled by those notions, those concepts and those ideas. Suddenly, the sage comes around and says: „All are one. All are linked in the same self." This seems shocking!

But then, by *śravana* and *manana*, by deeper and deeper reflection, all the other layers fall off, and then this new truth, new regulation, takes over, as it were, and that begins to rule. That is *nididhyāsita*. It is then that the truth that was heard from the master and reflected upon becomes really and truly real. That is realization.

Yājñavalkya also made it quite clear that when I talk about the self, it is not the ego-sense that I indicate, but that is the self which is deep within you, which even the mind cannot think of. When you become one with this self and when you drop this body, there is nothing.

„Oh, there is nothing? I thought there were going to be quite a lot of things!" He says: „No, wait a moment. Only when there is individuality, which is a product of ignorance, only when you and I are completely different from each other that I see you, I hear you, I taste you. But when the one self alone is the truth – who sees whom, who listens to whom, who touches whom when only one exists?"

Vijñātāram are kena vijānīyād (2.4.5).

That's the final statement of this great sage. That is the subject: the self being one, that self is the subject. The self is. Who is going to know this subject? Can the subject be made the object of knowledge?

„Bye-bye," he says, and gets up and walks away. *Vijñātāram are kena vijānīyād* – he drops that and walks out. And that is called *sat-cit-ānanda*, I introduce the word here.

That *cit* is consciousness, knowledge. It is not the knowledge that has been polarized into subject and object: „I know you". It is knowledge, which is the subject of all, and therefore which is not the subject, in which there is no division between subject and object, mere knowledge, pure consciousness.

That alone exists. When that alone is realized to be the sole existence, there is no fear, there is no struggle, no division, and therefore there is no sorrow. Hence, they say that this is pure bliss, *sat-cit-ānanda*. Bliss, again, not in the sense that I scratch your back, you scratch mine, we are both happy, no: when there is bliss, or happiness or a delight in which there is no division, a knowledge in which there is no division, a joy in which there is no division.

Having taught this, Yājñavalkya walked away.

8 Reflecting Self-Knowledge

To look within without taking anything for granted and without stopping a continuous questioning, that is the pattern that emerges from the *Upanishads*. I'm not allowed to take anything for granted, I'm not allowed to stop questioning. If you put these two together, you discover that a certain amount of faith is necessary and that faith must be constantly accompanied by a certain amount of constructive doubt, a doubt that does not doubt the possibility, but doubts the immediate reality.

It's a double-edged sword, and it's so sharp, a razor's edge, that it is difficult to see. I must have faith that there is perhaps something beyond this, because the master says so. When I ask him, the master says that there is something other than this. Without assuming that this is the final truth, I must look forward to the discovery that to the master is the truth.

To him it is truth, not for me. To me, this is true; I don't want to assume that he is right, I don't want to assume that I'm right, I want to have what you call *an open mind and an open heart*. But through that open mind and through that open heart, there is this razor-sharp intelligence.

> *Dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā*
> *sūkṣmayā sūkṣma-darśibhiḥ*
> (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.3.12).

There is a beautiful expression in one of the *Upanishads*, that though the self is omnipresent, nobody sees it, because it needs an extremely sharp intelligence. The awakened intelligence must be able to see through the gross and get into the subtle. Once again that is the reason why they insist upon the qualifications. As the quest intensifies more and more, the qualifications are there. The qualifications cannot be acquired by purchase, and the qualifications cannot be assumed by wishful thinking, but if the quest is intensified, the qualifications appear.

I cannot deny the existence of the world, I cannot deny myself even the pleasures of the world; by abandoning them, by pushing them away I'm still contacting them. But if I engage myself in the quest of the truth, these things merely drop away, they lose their significance, they lose their importance. When you fall asleep, the world just drops away without being abandoned, without any struggle whatsoever. Can all these qualities and qualifications happen in a similar way? Then it is real, otherwise it is artificial.

That is beautifully illustrated in a story which occurs in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. The creator, Brahmā, or what the Upanishad calls Prajāpati, was discoursing on self-knowledge, and he said: „This self is beyond sin and suffering, the self is beyond hunger and thirst, and its notions materialize."

It is very important to remember this: the notions – not thoughts – that arise in the self materialize. The notions arise in the self, in the omniscient, omnipotent consciousness which has materialized here as you. You didn't think yourself that way. If all of us were allowed to think ourselves into what we'd like to be, we would all be completely different. It's not I who thinks and produces this, it is not the mind who thinks and produces this, it is the self; it is a notion of the self that has become this. If I realize that, then I don't bluff myself into a sort of wishful thinking and positive thinking.

He sang the glories of self-knowledge, that the self is so wonderful, that it is beyond sin and suffering, hunger and thirst, and all the notions that arise in that consciousness materialize, so that the world that you see is a notion in that consciousness. He who knows it becomes the ruler of the worlds.

There were two brothers in the audience, listening to this. One was called Indra, and he was the chief of the Gods, and the other was called Virocana, the chief of the non-Gods, the demons. I don't think at the moment we are talking about, they had been classified as Gods and demons; it comes just a little later. Both heard this and they were really impressed by the fantastic claim.

The master had said if you have self-knowledge, you will become the ruler of the three worlds. The *three worlds* may even mean the three inner worlds: waking, dreaming and sleeping. If you have self-knowledge, you may get psychic powers. But if you are looking for psychic powers, you won't get self-knowledge. This is the risk in pointing out the fruit or the result or the goal or the benefits of any spiritual exercise – then you are looking for that and you're lost!

These two, Indra and Virocana, were not interested in self-knowledge really, to begin with, they were more interested in the results. Both joined the master's household as his servants, because in those days, the master wouldn't talk to you unless you served him. Then they achieved an attunement. If you are my teacher and if I do not serve you, if I do not attune myself to you, I don't know your language, you might be talking of something else.

So, they went into the kitchen and started working there, and they lived like that for 32 years before they asked the first question. After 32 years, Brahmā called them and asked: „What do you want? What are you here for?"

They said: „We would like to have that self-knowledge that you have been talking about." „Oh, that's easy! Look into the mirror, what do you see?" „I see myself." „That's it. Look into a basin of water, what do you see?" „I see myself." „That's it. That's the self."

Both went away, one went this way, one went the other way. To Virocana, it was quite clear: „What did I see? I see this face, and I see my dress and I see all my adornments, and the father, the guru, says that this is the self! That's obvious. So, I must become strong, eat, drink and be merry; naturally I'm happy, I'm healthy. If only I do some *haṭha* yoga every morning, I'm free from suffering, I'm free from pain, I'm free from illness. If I abolish all ideas of virtue or *thou shalt, thou shalt not*, there is no sin: also easy."

All the problems are solved immediately! Get rid of your own notions of virtue and vice, there is no sin. Take care that you don't eat rotten food and that you don't starve, eat the right food at the right time, do some yoga *āsana*s and you are healthy. Gang up and fight, and everybody is conquered. That's it! He went to his followers and told them: „This is the truth! The body is the self. This is the ultimate reality. Eat, drink and be merry, make it as strong as possible and you can conquer the whole world, that's what the master said." When you listen to a discourse, you pick up only two or three sentences which seem to suit the mind. The rest of it is forgotten.

Indra went away also, and as was the custom he wanted to do some *manana*, chew it. He sat down to reflect: „All that is true, yes, this is my body, if somebody pinches it, I'm hurt. So, obviously, this is the self. But the old man also said it's free from hunger and thirst. The body is not free from hunger and thirst. Even if I avoid disease, illness, pain, it is subject to old age and death, hunger and thirst."

What do you do in such a situation: you have been living with the guru, and silently, unostentatiously, and almost unknown to the guru, you were serving him for 32 years, and then he gives you such flippant advice which seems to be totally illogical, unsatisfying – what do you do? „A crook! I'll go and get somebody else. He doesn't even know how to instruct me." Indra didn't do that. He went back to the master and said: „I think I have misunderstood you. Something is not clear. Can you help me a little more?"

He said: „You're right. That you have not understood correctly is correct. Go back into the household." After 32 more years, he asked: „Yes, what do you want?" „I want to know the self, self-knowledge."

„Ah! What happens to you when you go to sleep?"

„I begin to dream." „That is the self. Who is the dreamer? That is the self."

„That's right! That dreamer is not really affected by illness, the dreamer is not really affected by hunger and thirst and so on. You may dream, but when you wake up, all that is gone."

He went away, apparently satisfied. Then once again, as he sat down to reflect on it, there were some difficulties: „It's not quite satisfying. There is still some unhappiness in dream, some sorrow in dream, and hunger and thirst are there in the dream – there is still some suffering to the dreamer in the dream. Maybe he doesn't experience it after waking up, but that my guru didn't say. Still not quite clear." He came back to the guru: „I think I've not understood correctly, still."

„Aha, okay, another 32 years." This is supposed to be Indra, the God of Gods, sort of the king of Gods, the chief of Gods! After the 32 years, which makes 96 in total, he came back. „Now, can I?"

„After you finished dreaming, what do you do?" „I sleep soundly."

„That is the self. You said, ‚I sleep soundly'. That's it, that is it. Who is it that sleeps soundly?" „I sleep soundly." „That's it."

Indra said: „Right, that seems to be absolutely perfect, because in deep sleep, there is no sin and no suffering, no sorrow and no hunger, no thirst, no pain, no old age, nothing." He went away and once again reflected over this: „All that is right, but then again, there is one little snag: I don't know that! All that is true, but if this is self-knowledge and I'm not even aware of it, then it's no knowledge at all! How is total ignorance equal to self-knowledge?" – some misunderstanding. He went back to the guru again and said: „Sir, there's some problem. Can you help a little more?" Still Brahmā said: „Go back. But this time only for five years." That makes 101, 96 plus five.

When he came back, it was easy. He said: „That which is awake in dream, that is it. That which is not affected by any of this, that which was awake in your deep sleep, that is what is awake even now. And it is that that dreams, it is that that sleeps. You are that."

We were finished in about half an hour; it took 101 years. The truth that was true at each stage possessed this seeker, and he had to chew it and chew it, and with every cell of his being see the defect in it. It's not merely intellectually thinking: „Oh, well, it doesn't seem to be right." Every cell of your being first must be possessed by the idea that this is the truth, and then every cell of your being, not just your intellect, not just your heart, every cell must reverberate with this uncertainty. That uncertainty is composed of faith plus doubt. You're unwilling to drop the one or the other. You're unwilling to drop the faith, saying „It's all nonsense" – then, of course, you are on this side. You are a real fool, which is nice, and if you drop the doubt, the faith is confirmed. But it is when these are there together, there is uncertainty that keeps you going.

The scriptures often talk about the *three worlds*. You have this expression on nearly every other page in most of the yoga Vedānta scriptures. This is my waking world, the world of my waking life, and when I go to sleep and start dreaming, I'm in another world altogether, and that is my dream world, and when I sleep, that's another kind of world where there is dense darkness. These three are also known in some texts as *the three bodies*. What participates in the waking life world is the physical body; what creates the dream world, lives in it, enjoys in it, suffers in it, is the subtle body, *sūkṣma śarīra*. And that which experiences the deep sleep is the causal body. This is more theory than anything else. I merely mention it, because it's not of great practical importance.

There is a very famous *Upaniṣad*, called *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. It's very brief and very deep, and fairly enigmatic because it's supposed to be an explanation of *Oṁ* which it divides into four parts: *a, u, ma* and the *ardhamātra*. It equals each one of these three as the waking, the dreaming and the sleep which is the physical world, the subtle world or the causal world. The *ardhamātra* is that which is beyond, the *turīya*. This *Upanishad* contains one of the *mahāvākya*s, the *great expositions of the truth*: *I am Brahman, ātmā Brahman.*

I am Brahman, this self is the infinite. How is the self infinite? Because that self is constant in all three states. This is the simplest way in which it can be looked at. These three states and the three bodies are related to each other. And the three bodies are also expanded into what is known as the *five sheaths*, *pañcakośa*, the five *kośa*s.

What are the five sheaths? – Before we go into the description of the five sheaths, it is important to remember that it is not like the dress you wear, with one layer on top of the other. If you get caught in that layer-concept, then you might misunderstand the whole thing.

The five sheaths that are described in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* are in reality the one truth observed from five planes of consciousness, from five dimensions. The same body is physical and material when it is absorbed by the materialized, which has a material outlook, a material vision, physical vision. The same body is vibrant energy when it is looked at from the energy viewpoint, on the plane of energy. The same

body is thought, intelligence, materialization of thought when it is thought of. And the same body is vibrant intelligence, vibrating intelligence, when it is looked at from that point of view. It's not sheath after sheath, but it is one substance, one truth looked at from different planes.

There was a great sage called Bhṛgu and he went to a teacher. Here again it happens to be his own father, because the father was God, Varuṇa. Varuṇa is the God who presides over waters. And this Bhṛgu was considered a sage. It's funny, isn't it, that all the students in the Upanishads are or were already sages, not ignorant people seeking to understand something? No, they were sages, great ones who had composed mighty scriptures on their own. Even in their own mind, there was this doubt, there was that little confusion, a little bit of non-understanding, and a touch of sorrow, a touch of pain, a touch of something or other which made them unsure of themselves, or the individuality, the I: „I am Bhṛgu, I am a sage." Even this has to go! And so, this Bhṛgu went to his father, Varuṇa:

> *adhīhi bhagavo brahmeti*
> (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad,* 3.1).

He asked a very simple question with deep sincerity: „Please, tell me what the absolute truth is." And the old man – he must have been old, because he is supposed to have presided over the cosmic waters – said: „It's simple! The eyes, the ears, the nose, what you see, speech, all this, all this, all this is the truth." Having given a vague hint, he also dropped a bombshell:

> *yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante*
> *yena jātāni jīvanti* (3.1).

„That from which all these have arisen, from which all these are born, and in which all of them exist, and to which all of it returns." That's all. It's very easy.

„Ah. How do I get this?"

> *Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva*
> *tapo brahmeti* (3.2).

„It is also simple: meditate."

Tapas may mean *meditation* here, or *penance*, whichever you want to take it. *Tapo brahmeti* – that itself is the truth. That meditation itself is self-knowledge! And therefore, if meditation does not shine as self-knowledge, it's not meditation, it's a hallucination. *Tapo brahmeti* – that *tapas* itself, that meditation itself is Brahman. And so, if you engage yourself in *tapas*, that meditation itself is Brahman. And so, if you engage yourself in *tapas*, the truth must shine.

„Aha. Good." Bhṛgu, the sage went away to a bush and started meditating: „*Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante* – that from which all these beings arise. *Yena jātāni jīvanti* – that because of which all of these remain and to which they return. That is truth, that is the truth. What gave rise to all this? Matter, food."

What gives rise to a baby, a hen, a chicken? Food. Her flesh becomes the flesh of her children, the babies. And they in their turn grow by eating food. And when the time comes, this re-enters the cycle of elements, becomes food again, recycled.

„Ah,

annaṃ brahmeti vyajānāt (3.2)

– this is the supreme truth. The supreme truth is material. This matter, this physical body, this flesh, which is nothing but recycled, processed food, this is truth."

But then you are to verify with the teacher if that is right. There was no doubt in his mind because he was convinced that that was the truth. He came back to the teacher: „Sir, I think I've found it." „What?" „*Annaṃ brahmeti vyajānāt.*" „Aha." „Because it is from food that all things are born or all of them consist of food, and they get back into this food."

The teacher merely repeated: „*Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva* – meditate, go on, don't stop meditating, *tapo brahmeti* – because that *tapas* itself is Brahman, meditation itself is self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is not something which is to be gained through meditation. Meditation itself is self-knowledge."

„Ah." He got the message that the old man was not satisfied. Instead of the disciple not being satisfied, the guru is not satisfied. „Okay, let me go. Ah, is there something other …"

At no stage in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* is there a suggestion that the previous statement was wrong or false. I think this very important to remember. They do not say that the body is unreal, they do not say that the statement that we're all born of food, and we all exist on account of food is illusory. The teacher merely listens to the young man's discovery that food is the supreme truth and doesn't respond in either way. He merely says: „Go on, go on and meditate, go and meditate." And Bhṛgu goes away to meditate. After some time, he comes back.

Prāṇo brahmeti vyajānāt (3.3).

The next stage: it's true, the body is there, the body was born of flesh, but the body exists not only by the food that is eaten, it is animated by a life-force, energy. And as a matter of fact, it is born of energy! If the energy was not there, there would be no creation; no creation, no procreation.

Aha! He was right! He didn't quite applaud my first discovery because he knew that *prāṇa* is the supreme thing. He came back to Varuṇa and said: „Father, I have discovered!" „Hmm. What is it?" „*Prāṇa* is the supreme truth: *Prāṇo brahmeti vyajānāt*." Now I think that we're getting into the mood: it is not that the flesh is false, and the energy is real. The same thing is looked at from a different angle, on a different plane, in a different dimension.

Instead of looking upon that as flesh, I'm seeing that that itself is vibrant energy. The angle of vision is changing. „Ah, very good," he said. „Go, go away, meditate a little more:

tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva
tapo brahmeti. (3.3)

Meditate, meditate. That meditation itself is self-knowledge." That means: not satisfied. There is not even a suggestion here that the guru was not satisfied, or the disciple was not satisfied. If you read between the lines, you also find a suggestion that as long as the answer can be formulated, it is not self-knowledge, it is a product of thinking.

Bhṛgu goes back, meditates again: „Why didn't I think of that before? There is energy, but then the energy is functioning on the wings of thought. It is not a blind energy. It is thought that brings about all this, it is thought that directs. Naturally. I can see this even in the procreation of children. The father and the mother look at each other, they think they want to get married, they think they should raise a family, and so the family arises. If they didn't think at all, would something happen? No! – Ah, that's it."

Back to the guru: „Sir, I have discovered!" „What?"

Mano brahmeti vyajānāt (3.4).

Mind is Brahman! Mind is the ultimate truth, thought is the ultimate truth." „Hmm." „Because everything happens because of thought, all these things come into being, because of thought, mind, and they exist thinking." Life is made possible because of thought.

And the great guru patiently listens to this: „Okay, go on, go on."

Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva
tapo brahmeti (3.4).

That's all he says: „Go and meditate, meditate. You will see, you will know." „I see." „Not yet." Okay, go away, go back to the bush. He sits and meditates: „What is mind? Mind is after all thought. Something goes on boiling, like a kettle, and the activity that goes on in the intelligence is called *the mind*."

What is the water in the kettle before it begins to boil? The boiling or the activity of the water as it begins to boil in the kettle is mind, but the water was there even before you plugged the kettle in. In the same way, what is this mind before it became mind, before it started to boil, before it pushed up all that activity, before it started churning? Right – intelligence, that's it!

He argues within himself. „There are states in which the mind does not function, deep sleep for instance. And yet, without sleep I cannot live. I had ignored the deep sleep when I brought the discovery to the father that mind is the supreme truth. That's why he kept quiet. Got it!" And went back to the old man:

vijñānaṃ brahmeti vyajānāt (3.5).

„I have discovered it now. It is not the mind, but something different, *vijñānaṃ*. It is the intelligence that is beyond the mind. That is it."

„Hmm." „It is from that all these beings arise, it is in that everything exists, including during deep sleep, to which all these return." „Ah." „Yes, naturally!"

Tapasā brahma vijijñāsasva (3.5),

– go on, meditate a little more!"

And then, the *Upanishad* merely concludes with an ecstatic statement. Probably – this is my guess – probably the young man came back laughing aloud, and both of them laughed and kept quiet. That scene is described in the *Upanishad*:

Ānando brahmeti vyajānāt (3.6).

Ānanda is bliss. He came to know …, know what …

There it abruptly stops. The teacher doesn't say: „Go and meditate some more" – there is nothing, nothing to meditate.

Though some commentators take this to mean that there is some suggestion of the causal body, it may not mean that. It may only mean a spontaneous, ecstatic joy expressed both by the teacher and the taught.

There again, of course, those who deal with this *pañcakośa*s: the *annamaya*, the sheath of the physical body; the vital body, *prāṇa*; the mental body, the mind; and the intellect, intelligence; and when they talk of *ānanda*, they really imply the soul or the *jīva*, but it may also mean the supreme reality which is past the ego.

9 Encounters with the Guru

The episode of Indra, the student who spent 101 years with the guru in the *Chandogya Upaniṣad*, and the entire *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, are both devoted to the three states of consciousness: waking, dreaming, and sleep.

After challenging the validity of these, the *Upanishad* suggests a fourth state, *turīya*. I think it's important also to investigate this. Often it is implied in teaching that the superconscious state or *samādhi* is not the waking state, nor the dreaming state, nor the sleep state, but it is a fourth state, which means you're supposed to reject all these, abandon all these, and be looking for a fourth state. The truth may be very different.

Consciousness in its functioning – the kettle that is boiling – is subject to these three: now I'm awake and during this period, the consciousness seems to be outside. You open your eyes, you see what is outside. The ears are open, they hear the noise that comes from outside. The nose is open and therefore it smells what is outside. A funny statement, but it's true: my consciousness now is spread outside. I see the mountain, I see the lake, I see the birds, I see the trees, I see the grass. My consciousness is spread outside. Or drop the *my*, it's not so important: the consciousness is spread outside.

When I close my eyes and doze off, I begin to dream; the same consciousness is inside now. The same senses are there: seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, thinking. After some time, the same consciousness thinks: „I know nothing, I see nothing, I smell nothing, I taste nothing", and that's called *deep sleep*.

What is it that consciousness which undergoes all these modifications? What is the consciousness that is spread outside now? What is the consciousness that dreams and what is the consciousness that thinks that it's sleeping, that thinks that it sees nothing, thinks that it knows nothing? That in itself is beyond all those three. That in itself is not the waking state, that in itself is not the dreaming state, that in itself is not the sleep, but it is not outside of these three.

Consciousness is the substance of which all these are made, and which is therefore different from all these fragmented states of consciousness. Consciousness modified in a certain way is the waking state, consciousness modified in a certain other way is the dream state, consciousness modified in a certain other way is sleep. The unmodified unconsciousness, what is called *the fourth state* – it is not a state! It is the continuum that runs through all these, so that I don't have to drop all this waking state and go into *samādhi*. The consciousness is not dropping waking, dreaming and sleep and going to a superconscious state, so that one in the superconscious state does not dream and does not sleep.

When this is realized, not merely understood intellectually, there is an immediate sense of freedom. Whatever be your thought, whatever be the emotion, whatever be the feeling, whatever happens, you suddenly realize that all this is nothing but another modification of the same consciousness.

If I love you, the consciousness has undergone one type of modification. If I hate you, the same consciousness has put on another dress. When it puts on one dress it's called *love*, when it puts on another dress, it's called *hate*, when it puts on a third dress, it's called *fear*, when it puts on some other

dress, it's called *waking*, when it puts on another, it's called *dream*. What it is in itself is pure, absolutely pure. That is the beauty of the teaching! If it is rightly understood, it instantly frees you, not from the waking state, not from the dream state, not from the sleep state, but from the limitations of these.

Modifying these states is not realization of the fundamental ground of the whole thing. In the case of what you call a *worldly man*, his consciousness is modified into dollars and cents; in the case of the so-called religious man, his consciousness is modified into churches and temples and prayer beads. Consciousness as modified is consciousness modified, it is not the truth. His consciousness says: „I'm a businessman and a millionaire." This consciousness says: „Oh, I'm a swami and a wise man." One is as foolish as the other. What is this consciousness in its unmodified state? Do I realize from moment to moment that however exalted the thought may be and however base the thought may be, it is still thought, and the content is consciousness? Then you are instantly liberated!

There is another beautiful section in the same Upanishad, *Chandogya Upaniṣad*, where the famous sage Nārada goes to someone called Sanatakumāra. Very much like the other dialogues, this is a fairly long dialogue. Nārada prostrated to Sanatakumāra: „Please, Sir, I'm sort of a breathing library. Could you enlighten me?"

„What have you read so far?" He said: „It will take some time. If you don't mind, I can give you a list." Then he rattles off: „I've done all the *veda*s and all the *śāstra*s and scriptures and history, geography, biology, all the *-ologies* in the world".

Sanatakumāra, after having heard all the scriptures that this man has read, said: „Why do you waste your time? You just have to read the dictionary once." They are just words! You talk about a million things, but they are just words! We use words for things we know nothing about. Starting from there, there is a very beautiful exchange of crossfire.

After eliciting all these answers from Nārada, the student, Sanatakumāra, the master, takes over. Every time, he makes a statement, Nārada asks: „Is there something greater than that?" It ends with a beautiful, beautiful declaration:

> *Yo vai bhūmā tat sukham nālpe sukham asti*
> (*Chandogya Upaniṣad* 7.23).

„There is something greater than everything." There is something greater than food, there is something greater than the air you breathe, there is something greater than the pleasures that you enjoy, there is something greater than the happiness that you feel in a religious state, there is something greater than hope, there is something greater than wrath.

Finally, he says: „There is something great, beyond which there is nothing greater – *yo vai bhūmā tat sukham*, the totally unconditioned mind, the absolutely unconditioned consciousness. And that alone is happiness, joy, bliss. *Yo vai bhūmā tat sukham nālpe sukham asti:* there is no happiness or pleasure in the finite, in the conditioned state."

So, waking is one type of conditioning, dreaming is another type of conditioning, sleep is another type of conditioning, and that which forms the substance of all this, is the unconditioned and unconditionable, indivisible. One who realizes this does not see any need to change one kind of conditioning into another conditioning, but sees in that conditioned itself the unconditioned. If I do not like this room, I do not have to knock it down. Whatever I'm going to do, I'm going to put up something else, it's the same thing. But can I, sitting in this room, already realize that the space has not been tampered with at all?

Can I see that, without making any change, without effecting any transformation? Transformation means merely changing the form. I shaved off my hair and became a swami. That is only shaving the head, not becoming a swami! Without making these transformations, can the truth be seen straight away? The form may change, let it change, if it must change. But with or without the change, with or without the transformation, the truth that does not undergo the transformation is free. That is freedom, instant freedom. Who is able to rise to that level is not caught up in either love or hate and anger or jealousy and so on. You see that it's meaningless, the whole thing is meaningless.

Only when a relationship is seen to be real do I fight to sustain or to destroy it. When it is seen as a modification of the same consciousness, then there is no need to sustain it and there is no need to destroy it. There is no need to keep all this show going, and there is no need either to bring that show to an end. Let it be as long as it wants to be, and if it wants to go, let it go – that's it.

The source from which this knowledge is gained is called the *guru*. Ultimately, that experience which unveils this truth is itself the guru.

In another section of the same *Upanishad*, the *Chandogya Upaniṣad*, there is a brilliant story where a young boy goes to his mother and says: „Mother, I'd like to lead a religious life, and so I want to go and be instructed by a guru. Would you help me? As soon as I go to a sage, he would ask me: ‚Who are you? What is your family, who is your father and grandfather?' and so on. And I'll have to answer him. I haven't seen the father. To what clan, to what caste do I belong?"

That mother pats him on the back and says: „My son, I myself do not know. When I was young, I was working as a servant-maid in many houses, and you were born. I don't know who your father was. I understand your problem. When this sage is going to ask you: ‚Who is your father? And to what clan do you belong?' you tell him that ‚I don`t know who my father is. So, I take my mother's name. I am Satyakāma'" – Satyakāma is *one who is devoted to truth*. „'And Jābāla is my mother's name. That is my identification, Sir. Would you please instruct me? Please do.'"

The boy goes to a teacher, and he asks the same question: „To what clan do you belong? What's your identification?" And he says: „Sir, this is precisely the question I asked my mother just before I came to see you. My mother told me this ..." – the whole story.

The old man is thrilled! What he says is a tribute to the Brahmins, but it's also a rebuke: „That's excellent! You must be a Brahmin." In other words: „Your father must have been a Brahmin. Only a Brahmin could speak the truth so boldly. Come, I'll initiate you."

While saying „I initiate you", the holy man uses the word *upanayana* (4.4.5). *Upanayana* means what in the Jewish tradition is called *bar mitzvah*. There is a ceremony in the Hindu tradition also, and that is when the student is invested with the holy thread and admitted into the teacher's household. *Upanayana* really means *secondary eyesight*: „So long you have been looking with your outer eyes, now I'll give you another eyesight, insight, through which you will be able to see the spiritual truth."

You're waiting to see what kind of instruction the teacher gave him. The teacher takes him to the backyard, and he has a large herd of cattle, 400 cows. He says: „You see the cows there? Look after them!" That's the first initiation that the young student receives to live a religious life. And he says: „Yes, Sir", drives the cattle into the forest and goes away.

While going away, he makes up his own mind: „I'll stay with the cattle till they multiply into a thousand. Till then I'll tend the cows." This must have taken some time, a few years at least. He was absorbed in tending the cows. Then one cow tells him: „Now we are a thousand. Take us back to the teacher. Before we go, I will instruct you in one-fourth of the truth."

What is one-fourth of truth? „Brahman stretches out from the East to the West, from the North to the South. Thus, I have told you one fourth of the truth. That is radiant, it radiates in the four directions. That is one-fourth of Brahman, one foot of Brahman. If you imagine the truth having four legs, this is one leg. Take us home, and on the way, fire will instruct you in another quarter, another foot tomorrow." And this boy is driving the cattle home.

The next evening, he kindles the fire, and the fire talks to him: „I will give you one-fourth of the truth." And what is that? „The earth, the heaven, the space and the ocean – all these constitute the next quarter of the truth."

This way it has been expanding laterally, now in height and depth. That is the second one-fourth. Understand this very well, grasp it very well. This boy who had disciplined himself in the forest for these few years, is eager to grasp it.

„This is called *the endless*, *ananta*. There it is radiating, here it is endless. You do not know where this is, what its height is, what its depth is: *ananta*, endless. That is another fourth of the truth. Now you've got half of it, keep going. Tomorrow a swan will teach you another fourth of the truth."

The next day, he halts somewhere, and a swan lands in front of him and says: „Fire, the sun, the moon, lightning, these constitute another fourth of this truth, another fourth of this Brahman." First, there was this radiating lateral expansion, then there was this endlessness, above and below, so that all space has been covered, and the light in that space, aha, that aspect is the third fourth of this Brahman. „Meditate upon this. Go on. Tomorrow, someone else will reveal the fourth, the final quarter."

And he goes on. The next day, another bird, a kind of loon, comes to him and says: „I have the fourth part: *prāṇa*, cosmic life. *Prāṇa* is not the breathing, *prāṇa* is not even the thing that keeps this body alive, *prāṇa* is energy moving in consciousness. That is the truth, the fourth part of truth, fourth part of Brahman."

These four together have conveyed to him the absolute truth in a very beautiful and simple way, step-by-step: the radiating and the endless, the light in it and the life in it. That's it.

Driving the thousand cows, the boy returns to the master's house. The master looks at him and says: „Ah! Your face is shining as if you knew the truth already. Who taught you?" The boys says: „Other than human beings, Sir. Other than human beings." And he adds: „I would still love to hear the truth from your lips." The master says: „I'm going to tell you exactly the same thing as you have already heard."

So that it need not necessarily be some kind of a great, bearded, flowing matted-locked person that sits there and instructs us. The revelation can come from anywhere at any time, from human, sub-human, non-human, super-human. It's the inner discipline that matters, the discipline that this boy underwent by tending to the cows till they multiplied from 400 to a thousand.

10 The *Mahāvākya*s: The Complete Circle

The very essence of the Upanishads and therefore the very heart of *jñāna* yoga is said to be the *mahāvākya*s. Again, if you use a capital *M,* it becomes something deified, dignified, but the word simply means *the great sentence*, *a great utterance*; *mahā*: *great*, *vākya*: *statement* or *utterance*. They are four great statements. The first:

> *aham brahmāsmi*
> (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.4.10).

You have probably heard it: *aham brahmāsmi*. This has been interpreted, misinterpreted, protested, favored, prescribed. „I am Brahman" – what an egotistic statement! Therefore, a protest movement starts. Someone says: „I am Brahman." And someone else says: „Nonsense. Set fire to him. Throw him into the Ganges!" But if it is realized, with the kind of progressive realization we have been talking about here, then the *aham, I* itself has a different meaning. When a young man says, „I am Brahman, follow my feet," someone throws a bucket of cool water on him: „Clear out!". *Aham brahmāsmi* therefore means something very different. „I am Brahman" does not mean *I* am Brahman, pointing to my own chest.

When I refer to this body, this psycho-physiological complex sitting here, I refer to it as *I*. Pointing to you, I say *you*, but you, referring to yourself, say *I*. We call that other person *him*, but he, too, refers to himself as *I*. If you remove all these names, what remains is I. I here, I there; everywhere there is I. There is nothing but I. That is what they meant. That *I am* is Brahman: *aham brahmāsmi*.

This *mahāvākya*, *aham brahmāsmi*, occurs in that famous, huge and in some parts archaic *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. The formula is the heart of its teaching that is, as I've mentioned earlier on, the teaching of the sage Yājñavalkya who demands that we should not even get hung about formulas like *aham brahmāsmi*, but resort to the other thing: *neti-neti-neti*. He was the famous sage who said: „How can you describe the self, the cosmic being, in any positive terms?"

Cosmic being, or God, or whatever it is, described in positive terms, becomes an object. It is not an object. It is not an object of knowledge, it is knowledge in itself. Knowledge in itself cannot be objectified, it cannot be described, and therefore it can only be indicated by *neti-neti*: „not this*,* not this*,* not this*,* not this".

When you have thus discarded everything that you have and you are as *not this*, you don't even want to say, „what remains is Brahman". The expression *what remains is Brahman* pretends that what you discarded is not Brahman. Again, you are making a division there. When you keep on discarding all this, all this, all this, suddenly you discover that nothing is there to be discarded. The moment the salt-doll jumps into the lake, it gets dissolved, it becomes the lake, it is the lake. So, he says: that is the approach, not a description. A description is a destruction and a distraction.

A description describes nothing, it is only a set of words. However, there's a nice little formula in this *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, *aham brahmāsmi*, which suggested that this truth could also be positively

indicated, as long as you're careful, cautious not to hang up on the words. So, they used it: *aham brahmāsmi*.

Related to that, there is another formula:

> *tat tvam asi*
> (*Chandogya Upaniṣad* 6.8.7),

„thou art that", „that thou art". That is, the teacher says *tat tvam asi*, „you are that," and the student says: *aham brahmāsmi*, „I am that." This is sort of an initiation or instruction. What is *that*? What is Brahman?

Another *Upanishad*, called *Aitareya Upaniṣad* has an extremely beautiful and fairly longish statement at the tail end of which occurs another beautiful formula:

> *prajñānam brahma* (3.3).

You say: „I am Brahman" – what is that Brahman? *Prajñānam brahma*: „Intelligence or consciousness is Brahman".

Where you find this consciousness, that statement declares: everything in the universe is established in consciousness, and everything in the universe is consciousness. Everything in the universe becomes aware of its own nature and the nature of others through intelligence, all the others being merely a modification of the same intelligence.

Why is it I see that as a clod of earth? Because I am the clod of earth; this clod of earth sees that and declares that a clod of earth. A squirrel on the road, looking at the car rolling down does not see it as a car, it sees it as lord Yama, the deity presiding over death, coming towards me! An ant crawling on the swami doesn't say: „What a nice man!" Oh, no: „Enormous thing. I'm climbing a mountain!" And when the finger moves towards it: „My God, an avalanche!"

Though these differences may exist, the basic truth still is that there is intelligence, there is consciousness, there is awareness. That awareness is Brahman. Remove all the trappings, the trappings of a stone, the trappings of a horse, the trappings of a mosquito, the trappings of a mouse. What exists at the very core of it is that awareness, that knowledge, that truth.

In that, there is no division, there is no diversity at all, and so there is a long list: the mountains, the forest, the trees, the grass, the water, the sky, the birds, the fish, and the beasts, everything, animate and inanimate, moving and unmoving – all these are established in pure consciousness. And that pure consciousness is Brahman. That Brahman you are, and that Brahman I am. In other words: That consciousness I am, that consciousness you are.

This consciousness is pure knowledge in which there is no division of the subject and the object, of the experience and the experiencer, of this sight and the seen. When there is no division, what exists is pure consciousness.

So that one may not get the wrong impression that it is there and not here, another *Upanishad*, called *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* declares:

ayam ātmā brahma (2).

Don't go searching for it in the mountain caves and the forests, dive into yourself and see what that self is, deep within your own being – your own being. You start with the notion that you have your own being and go right down into it, using the *neti-neti* formula again: what you are in the core of your being is what everything is, everywhere and at all times, *ayam ātmā brahma*. It is that self within you – within you again – which has these four feet, as it were: the waking, the sleep, and the dream, and the transcendental consciousness. It's the same. The consciousness that is indwelling is omnipresent. The indwelling consciousness is omnipresent.

Tat tvam asi occurs in the *Chandogya Upaniṣad*. It's a very interesting and beautiful story. There was a wonderful sage, called Uddālaka Āruni, and he had a son, Śvetaketu. As was the general custom, though it has its own exception as you have seen, the father didn't want to teach his son, and he said: „Why don't you go and find a guru, find a teacher? We are too close to each other, and so my instruction won't be appealing to you. In our family, no one has so far remained a fool." Probably he invested him with the sacred-thread ceremony and sent him away. This boy went to study under a teacher for twelve years. I hope that some of the peripheral lessons of the story may not be lost on us.

He went to a teacher and stayed with him for twelve years. Obviously that teacher was not interested in *jñāna*, in enlightenment. He was probably interested in equipping this young boy with knowledge of geometry, algebra, and physics, chemistry, geography, and medicine, astronomy and astrology. After studying all this for twelve years he returned home. And how he came home! The scripture says he was over 24 at that time, but still: teenager behavior. He walked in and said: „Hello, Daddy."

The father looked at him: „That's great. Ah, you have spent twelve years to and worked hard to develop this arrogance? Come on, sit down – *upaniṣad*! Sit down near me. Tell me what you have learned. Incidentally, did you learn that knowing which you know everything?" „What is that?" It's silly. Can you learn geography and know chemistry? These are two different subjects. One has to learn geography to know geography and one has to learn chemistry to know chemistry. And here is somebody who says that if you know that thing, you know everything else.

„What is that?" He probably smiled cynically at this old man. The father, who now is about to become the guru, says: „I'll give you an example. If you take some clay in your hands, and if you know all about this clay, then you know everything about all that is made of clay. You know what you can do with the clay, how you can fashion pots and pans, how you can make pottery, and how you can apply it on your body for skin diseases. You know the properties of clay, you know what the clay is capable of doing.

And if you know gold in its pure form, you know that gold can be fashioned into ornaments, the value of gold, the price of gold, everything. Just like that, there is one knowledge, if you know that, then you know everything!"

The boy was educated only in logic. So, he says: „That seems to be logical." The cynicism has gone, the cynicism that this old man is talking nonsense. And so, he sits there and says: „If there is such a discipline, if there is such knowledge, I'm sure that my teacher didn't know it, either." He doesn't want to say, „I didn't ask the relevant question, I didn't seek this knowledge." The arrogance is still there. He says: „Obviously the teacher didn't know that either. So, why don't you tell me!" „Come and sit down."

Right in the beginning, the guru throws a bombshell: „You know I've told you about this clay and gold. What is clay is clay, and it is all the time clay, whether you call it *pot* or *pottery*, it is still clay. Whether you call it a *molded figure* or a *clay model*, it is still clay. The rest is only a description, words."

A description is both a distraction and a destruction. Distraction, because it doesn't allow you to get to the truth that it is clay, and a destruction, because it destroys your intelligence. The only truth is that it is clay. Can you in this manner discard all the words that you have been using so far, that this is a pot and this a vase, and this is a figurine, and see them as clay, having dropped away all the differences?

This discipline is *jñāna* yoga. When you have dropped all these words, what remains? In the same way, if you look round and you see that what on the surface seems to be complicated diversity is simple unity, it leads you towards simple unity.

There is a large section, dealing with all the material objects in the universe. „Take any of these," he says, „it's made of the three colors." Probably the father was a great artist. „Take the sun," he says, „the black color is the earth-color, the red color is the fire-color, the white color is water-color. When you take these three colors away, there is no sun:

> *trīni rūpāṇīty eva satyam* (6.4.1).

When you examine in this manner all the objects in the universe, they are all reduced to three, the three colors. And when you examine man, he also disappears to these three factors:

> *annamayam hi sāmya mana*
> *āpomayah prāṇas tejomayī vāg* (6.5.4).

This mind is nothing but food, and what you call the *life-force*, *prāṇa*, is nothing but water, and *tejomayī vāg* – there is fire which enables you to speak and function. And you take food: the essence, the subtlest part of the food becomes your mind, the middle part becomes your body, the third part is discarded. That's all, the whole thing can be neatly classified into these three groups."

„How can you say that my mind is made of food?" „That's very easy. Don't eat anything and then come back in one week. But first recite the *veda*s, what you have learned with the teacher." The son recites: „*Oṁ śaṁ no mitra śaṁ varunaḥ śaṁ no …*" And the father says: „Very good. Go, and come back after a week. Don't eat anything in the meantime."

After fasting for a week, the boy comes back. „Come on, repeat!" „Oh …." „What happened?" „I don't remember anything." „That's it! I told you! Have something to eat and come back. – Oh, now the mind has come back again! That's it. You see here that your mind is made from food." And from this mantra in

the Upanishad, all the food-fetishism started. Don't drink any liquid for a couple of days, you feel weak and run down, that's it. Drink a glass of water and you feel full of energy. So, the energy comes from water, *prāṇa* comes from water. The mind is made of the subtlest part of your food. And there is fire, energy that enables your body to function: *tejomayī vāg*.

If you look at these things without analyzing them, you see that the whole universe is made of just these three: earth, water and fire. Earth has a dark color, water has *śuklam* – need not necessarily mean *white*, it may even be yellow – and fire is red. When you take these three colors and mix them, you can create all objects in the world. The particular description of these objects is mere words, a description, a distraction, a destruction – forget it. Get to the root of the matter!

„Ah," he says, „this seems to make sense, tremendous sense. I shouldn't go away without gaining this." Now, the arrogant son has already become a disciple. He says: „Please tell me some more!" The old man gives some examples or illustration, at the end of each of which he uses the famous formula *tat tvam asi*.

One is the example of the ocean: rivers flow into the ocean. Before they join the ocean, they are called Gaṅga, Yamunā, Thames, Amazon, and once they come and fall into the ocean, they become ocean. Have they lost their identity? No. Their identity has been fulfilled. It is not a loss, but a fulfilment. The little river has become the vast ocean.

Because all these rivers flow into the ocean, does it swell? No. Because the ocean's water evaporates all the time, does it become empty? No. That's it, that's it. Think of that, contemplate that: fullness, which cannot be added to, which cannot be subtracted. That's it, this is the essence. It's not that I'm going into *samādhi* by refusing to be active and looking at my nose. The ocean does not do that. The ocean allows its waters to be evaporated, the ocean receives the waters that are discharged into it by the rivers. While all of this is taking place, it's still full. That is the meaning of the mantra that we end our satsang with:

> *Oṁ pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idaṁ*
> *pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate*
> *pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya*
> *pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate*
> (*Īśavasya-Upaniṣad*, Invocation)

Infinity plus infinity is infinity, infinity minus infinity is still infinity, and nothing happens to the infinity while everything is happening in it. Though everything is happening in it, nothing happens to it. That is the truth:

> *sa ātmā tat tvam asi śvetaketo*
> (*Chandogya Upaniṣad* 6).

That is the self, that is Brahman, that you are.

In the same way, honey: the bee collects nectar from various flowers, and then makes honey. The flowers seem to have lost their identity or individuality in that honey, but the honey itself is composed of all these – not of all these in their diverse natures, but there is a sweetness which seems to be totally different from the sweetness of all these put together, but it is non-different from all these. Where all this diversity has merged into unity, where all this diversity has attained fulfilment in this unity and the circle is completed – that's it. That is the secret. And that is the essence. And that is extremely subtle: *sa ātmā tat tvam asi śvetaketo* – that is the self. That you are. You are that.

There are another eight or nine examples. They are probably seated in front of the house, there was a big banyan tree. I don't know if you have seen a banyan tree: it's huge, enormous, it spreads out. He tells the boy: „Go fetch one of these berries, little fruits." „Here you are, Sir." „Break it." The berry is no larger than a large pea.

He brakes it. It's like a fig inside, it's therefore called the *holy fig*, but it's very small. „Break it. What do you see in it?" „Why, I see about a hundred, two hundred seeds." Each one of those banyan seeds is much smaller than a mustard seed. „Take one seed out of that and throw the rest away." He takes one seed and throws the rest away. „What do you have on your palm?" „One seed." „Ah. Break it!" I don't know how he broke that, he must have crushed it. „What do you see inside?" A seed which is smaller than a mustard seed, what do you see? He says: „Nothing." „Nothing? It is from that this banyan tree has come."

It's true of us. We also came from something much smaller than even a mustard seed. On the day of conception, you and I had to be looked at under a microscope. The beauty of it is that that nothing inside that single mustard seed contains the entire life story of this banyan tree. That it is going to grow into a banyan tree, how long it is going to last, how wide it is going to spread out, everything is registered there!

As subtle as that, subtler than even that is this consciousness, is this intelligence. *Tat satyam*: that is the truth, that is the only truth; all the rest is a description, that is the truth. *Sa ātmā tat tvam asi śvetaketo*: that is truth, that is the self, that you are.

And when he goes on repeating it, the boy says: „Thank you. Got it!"

That is the final, the end of this adventure called *jñāna*. There is certainly, to begin with, a sense of discarding: „Not this, not this, not this." And when I discard *not this, not this* what do I discard? I discard a description. No truth is discarded. The truth is never, cannot be discarded. What exists cannot be discarded. Discarded are the mental conditioning, the notions and the concepts and the descriptions that are stored in my own mind, and the descriptions that have become the mind.

What is the mind except all these concepts and notions put together? So, when all these concepts and notions and so on are discarded one after the other, what remains is not something other than what is. But there is a complete, radical change in my vision. In that vision, there is no division, the division being the creation of my own notions: *I, you, this, that*. When all these are gone, there is pure homogeneous

experience, and that is experiencing without even the division of a subject and an object: *sa ātmā tat tvam asi śvetaketo*.

He who is established in that, for him, there is neither anything to be taken or given up. But this has to become a realization, not a thought. If this becomes a thought, then it creates its own problems. If all this is stored as so many notions and metaphysical doctrines, then they create problems. But if they become true and they become real to us, we are free, liberated, and that's called *mokṣa* or *liberation*. It's not liberation from this world, or freedom from anything. It is freedom from division, it is freeing the vision from division.

One thing more: all this is from Swami Sivananda, the teaching comes from him. Only when we see this teaching not exemplified, not demonstrated, but alive in someone, it's then that it becomes clear. If someone has lived with Swami Sivananda for some time and watched how it's possible to live the teaching – or, since that is an absurd expression, how it's possible for the teaching to live, to be alive in one's life, then one realizes all this is not merely theory, it is living truth.

In the same way he also said very often that what I have done also you can do, just as Jesus said (*John* 14:12). You have heard it, I've seen it in Swami Sivananda, all this literally happening in the life and personality of Swami Sivananda. We have heard it now and in their own time, when problems come up in our life, when situations arise in our life, we will find that the teaching comes up to confront the problem, the teaching becomes a solution to the problem. Then it will become real in our life.

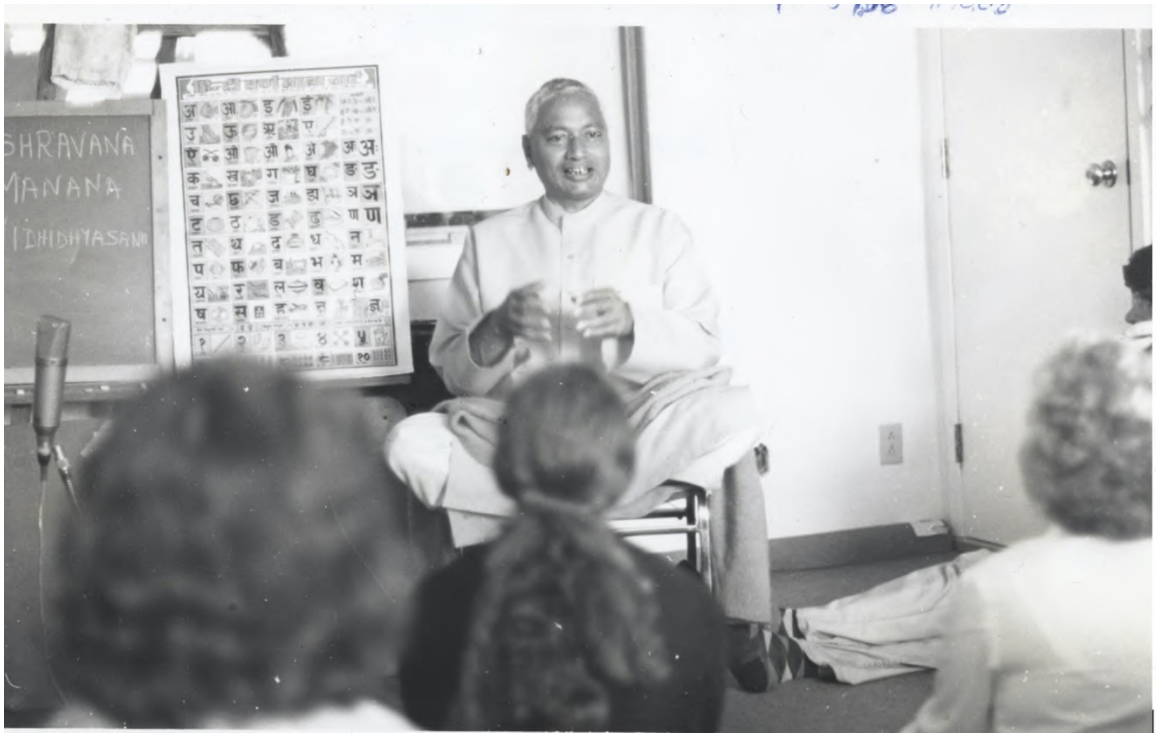


Figure 15. Swami Venkatesananda teaching at Yasodhara Ashram